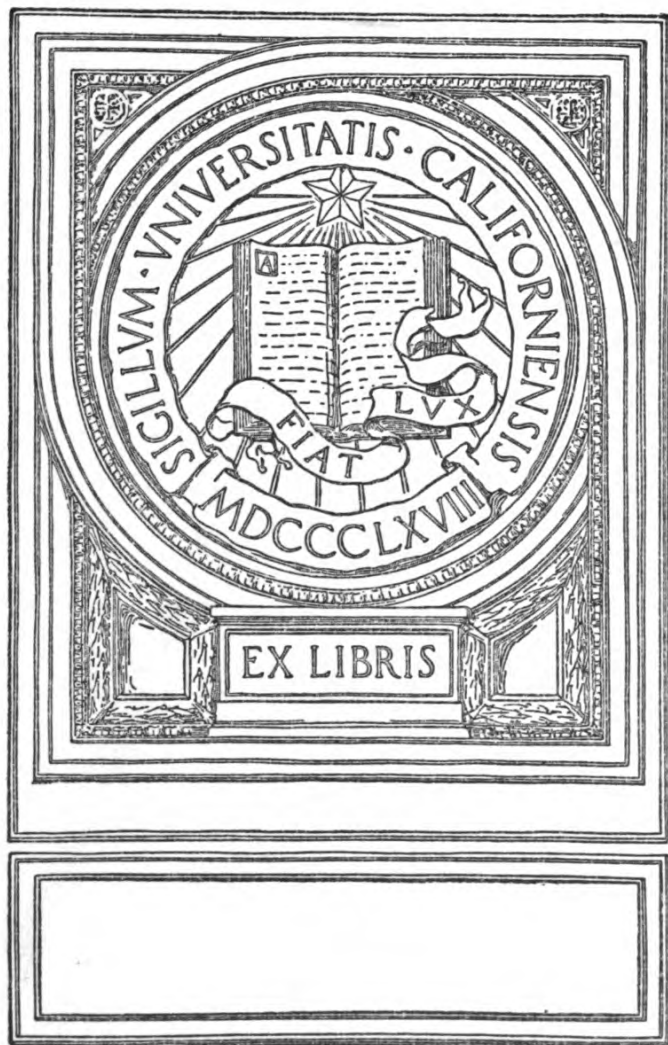


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*Very  
Truly  
Ours*



# *Very Truly Ours*

**Letters from  
America's Fighting Men**

*Edited by*  
**James Waterman Wise**

**DIAL PRESS • NEW YORK, N. Y.**

**1943**



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REPRODUCED





## *Foreword*

Ten million Americans are in the armed service of our country. This book is their story. It consists of letters written to mothers and fathers, to wives and sweethearts, to children and relatives and friends.

It is not a war book such as a newspaper correspondent might write. It is a human, not a military document. No letter included here was intended for publication and those which describe actual combat, do so informally—as the writers would recount adventures around their firesides, or at lunch time in shop or field.

Primarily, these letters are a cross-section of how our fighting men react to the new and strange experiences which the war has brought them:—the rookie's first day in camp; the change from civilian to military life and habits; the training to be soldiers and sailors and marines; the absence, often for the first time in their lives, from home and family; the voyages to distant lands and contacts with foreign people; the reality of battle—and of death in battle; the groping for, and finding of meaning and resolution and purpose in what they do; the gay and gallant and heroic and lonely events about which they have written to those they love best and miss most.

These letters, chosen from many hundreds, were sent in response to an announcement that this book was to be compiled. They come from all parts of the nation, and from men and women of different creeds and races, and in every walk of life. Those who offered

this material for inclusion feel, as I do, that many Americans will wish to and should share what means so much to them.

Indeed, in one sense these letters, though personal and intimate, are public domain. For there is hardly an American who has neither relative nor friend in the fighting forces. Thus the comradeship of the men who wrote these letters is here extended to us at home. We, who read them will be justified in feeling that they might have been written by our own fathers and husbands and sons and brothers.

In editing this anthology, I have chosen letters not only on different types of subjects, but from different types of men. They vary as widely as the personnel of our Fighting Forces: from the semi-literate to the intellectual; from the professional soldier to the religious mystic; from Iowa farmers to Oregon woodsmen to Brooklyn hackies.

I have not used the last names of the writers and the recipients of the letters, although each has been authenticated. Nor have I included the personal and frequently moving stories which accompanied them. It is noteworthy, however, that a number of the writers have been decorated, some have been wounded and others killed in action.

Moreover, I have avoided editorial notes, except where absolutely indispensable. The letters need none. They speak for themselves—and to and for our country. They are the America which fascists may well fear and free men love—the America we defend and cherish and dream and build.

I am profoundly indebted to all those who submitted letters, whether used or not. My one regret is that limitation of space made it impossible to include many more which were of exceptional interest and value. I am specifically indebted to *The Newtown Bee*, *PM*, *The Lamar Missouri Democrat*; to Robert A. Price, Military Editor, *Springfield Daily News*; to Leonard Lyons, *New York Post*; and to Evelyn Linwood for invaluable secretarial aid.

Finally and chiefly I am indebted to Ruth Rome Steiner, who has collaborated with me in selecting and editing the letters.

JAMES WATERMAN WISE





# *I—Learning to Fight*





*THE WAR BEGINS*

Camp Robinson, Arkansas, December 8, 1941

Dear Folks,

There isn't any way to know what will happen to us. All of us are rather bewildered at the sudden reality of war, but at the moment all we can do is wait for orders. It's natural that all of us are ready to fight, because the 350 soldiers who are dead in Hawaii are our brothers and all of us want to strike back at the killers.

It's funny how something like this can make you feel older and make you aware of your responsibilities. I hope I have learned my lessons well and that I can be valuable in whatever I do. There's no use in fooling ourselves, tonight is but the start of a terrible three or four years. There is no question in my mind but that Armageddon is almost here and at last, the forces of good and evil have thrown off the bonds of diplomacy and argument and will fight until one is destroyed. I am thankful that we have had a chance to learn what we have about war. Now, at last, I suppose the isolationists, obstructionists, profiteers and fifth-columnists will be disposed of . . . and our nation will be able to show what she can do, when her people are aroused and united. Tonight, all of our citizens must hop off the fence and take their places on one side or the other. It's unfortunate that so much time has been lost in the

last few years, but I suppose that in the old American way we were too busy working for what we wanted, to work for what we didn't want. Thank the Lord, that we've had a chance to mobilize, train and maneuver . . . and that our industries have had the opportunity to tool up and start to produce.

I guess the next weeks and months will bring changes and hardships to all of us. There may be times when we cannot let you know what we are doing. Don't worry about us. Go ahead and keep things running at home. Be glad that we are trained and know what we're doing. Have faith in the big shots, and be glad that if we do fight, we know what we're fighting about and are proud that we're on the side of good. I honestly think that our way of living will eventually lead to the greater happiness of all people, and that this war is the final attempt of brutality to prove that people cannot rule themselves and are to be nothing but pawns in the hands of the strong.

Keep your chins up, folks. We're just as tough as the next guy, and we're a year ahead of most of them in training. Whether there'll be emergency furloughs or not, I don't know, but as soon as we find out I'll let you know.

Take care of yourselves. Love,

Ken

### *"MAGGIE'S DRAWERS"*

Darling,

This little message of good cheer and greetings comes to you direct from the Municipal Social Center

of Junction City. It's a wonderful scene. I expect the Andrews Sisters and Abbott and Costello to make an entrance with Jinx Falkenburg on their heels. Hundreds of soldiers, writing, reading, playing checkers, and a 2-piano team playing "Dinah" like the old "player pianos" used to—the rooty-toot-toot version. It's Junction City's answer to the Red-light district. They've populated the municipal center with all the local Judy Garlands, who have apples in their cheeks and the "ain't-war-wonderful-look-what-it's-done-for-our-town" gaze in their eyes. The pretty ones, particularly, are absolute queens here. Even the not so pretty ones do pretty well in their Municipal Center, I'm told.

Let's see, where did I stop in the last letter? The officers out here are really something—the hardest guys I've ever seen. When they give an order you jump twenty feet. They're mostly big, muscular men who obviously know their business. The colonel made a speech at chow about the tradition of the cavalry and infantry, the purpose of America's Army, our war aims, and democracy in the fighting forces. This is an alright army and a fine group of men. I'm getting to like this place more and more. There's a great spirit here, and when we swing into line on the parade grounds, there's not much doubt about who's going to win the war.

But in the meantime, like the corporal says, we gotta get *rugged*.

Last nite, a third of the kids in our outfit were laid up with chills and fevers as a result of their inocula-

tions. I played Mrs. Wiggs of Barracks 2760, giving them aspirin and water. Because I'm older (and balder).

Here's bad news. We wear our steel helmets constantly, and I'm afraid it's massaging the last few hairs off my bald-spot! What with the helmet and the GI haircut, I look like a Capuchin monk.

Next week we're going to concentrate on rifle training, which is terrible for me because when I lie prone, my helmet keeps popping over my eyes. It's like a burlesque comedian's act. My pack pushes my helmet over my eyes, and when I remove the helmet, the lieutenant bawls "hey you," at me. So I put the helmet on, and then I can't see the damned target or anything else. So naturally they wave "Maggie's drawers" at me.

Just in case I forgot to tell you, "Maggie's drawers" is a red flag which the soldiers in the target pit wave when you miss the target completely. I'm completely baffled by this turn of events, and can only lie silently on my stomach and hope for a visitation. This particular lieutenant and I are going to have a showdown soon. He keeps looking at me and shaking his head as if to say, "How can any man be so dumb?" I had to travel all the way out here to be treated like an imbecile—and had to sit up two nites in a day coach to get here too.

And for a man who liked his sexual exercise more than somewhat in civilian life, I am now without desire. It must be either tons of saltpeter or the strenuous physical work-out, because I know damn well this isn't me. It's a good thing that you got pregnant before

I went into the army, otherwise we'd have a very listless child. I hope the baby isn't kicking too hard. If possible, I'll do what I can to stay on this side of the ocean, if only until after the baby is born. I got a big yen to see that kid, and intend to take a good look before I leave. In the meantime, you worry about nothing but yourself, your job, and making a pretty baby, boy or girl. I love you very much—even in the presence of Little Applecheeks, and Her Municipal Center. Under any circumstances, barracks will never take the place of the bedroom.

Love,

Ira

### *TUMBLING THROUGH SPACE*

Dearest Mother,

The first jump we made was on a Tuesday morning, about 10 o'clock. We had our chutes on since 8 o'clock and were waiting for it to get light enough and the morning ground wind to die down. We sat in the hangars talking and singing with cigarets, one after another, in our hands, and butterflies in our stomachs. Then finally our plane taxied up in front of the hangars, and we (the officers) climbed aboard. We must have presented a ludicrous appearance, each trying to appear more nonchalant than the others, while all the time you could see our knees knocking ten yards away.

After we were seated in the plane, twelve men on each side, the instructor gave us final orders and instructions, and then signaled the pilot and the plane

took off with a roar. We circled around the field a couple of times to get our bearings, and I couldn't help think as I looked out the window to the ground below, "God, I must be crazy, I'm going to jump out of this plane!" Then we got the order "stand up and hook up." We jumped up and fastened our static lines to the anchor cable which goes through the center of the cabin of the plane. My legs were positively weak by now, but I figured if a couple of thousand other guys could do it, I could too.

Then, "stand in the door." A major in our class was first, and stood in the door, the rest of us closed up on him—then, the electrifying command "go!" and the major was out, then the man after him and the next man and the next, and then there I was at the door and out! As I tumbled through space, first seeing ground then sky, then ground and sky again, I realized I had full control of my senses and then with a sharp tug and, bang! I realized my chute was open. I looked up at it, and have never seen a prettier sight than that white silk canopy against the blue sky. Then I looked down, and my apprehension grew as I looked at the tiny suspension lines that connected me to the canopy, but then I remembered that each one has a 450-pound tensile strength, and there are 28 separate lines. Before I realized it, the ground came rushing up at me. I maneuvered into a correct landing position, and landed lightly on my feet.

After getting out of the harness, the first thing I wanted to do was talk to someone, anyone, just to tell them I had just jumped out of a plane. It was an ex-

hilarating feeling I had never experienced, but no one was around. They were all busy rolling up their chutes. After you have jumped from a plane, you feel a certain kind of superiority over any soldier or officer in any other branch of the service, and when you realize you did it because you volunteered for this, and every other man in it volunteered, and wanted to do it, you feel pretty proud and cocky to be a qualified member of the U. S. Army Parachute Troops.

Your loving son,  
Alexander

## *A GOOD IOWAN*

Chicago

Dearest Carol,

I sure have had an awful exciting experience this afternoon. I was here at the Servicemen's Center on Michigan Avenue, when a group of civilian men walked through from room to room. No one seemed to recognize any of them, but it took a "good Iowan" like me to do it.

It was Vice President Henry A. Wallace. As he went by my table, in the cafeteria, I said, "Iowa," and he turned around and looked at me and said, "Are you from Iowa?" I answered, "Yes, Sir." Then he sat down for a minute at my table. He asked me when I had joined the Navy, and how I liked it. I told him "fine." He also asked about my work. I told him and he rose, and I stood up and shook his hand. Mayor Kelly also shook my hand, and a few other men whom I didn't

even know. I think one of them was Nash, but then I'm not sure.

About fifteen minutes later, he came out on the platform and gave a speech to the mob of servicemen and hostesses. He said, "I have wandered around unnoticed for an hour, and been here since noon, but it took a good Iowa lad to recognize me. Everyone clapped and then he called out my name (which I thought he would have forgotten), and asked me to rise and take a bow. I stood up, and gosh, I was so scared I felt like I couldn't even breathe.

After he had gone, soldiers, sailors and girls surrounded my table and asked me what he had said. I wish you could have been here too, Carol. I suppose if I want to find a dance here this evening, I won't have any trouble at all!

He also gave me his autograph, if you want to call it that. I will send it to you after I show it to the boys at the barracks. I am glad some of them were in the crowd, or otherwise they wouldn't have any reason to believe me. I suppose it will be F. D. R. next. How boring these gatherings are!

Love,

Joey

### *A SOLDIER'S WIFE*

Dearest Darling,

Today's a day off for me, but I can't stay away from the tower. I'm up here, but in my dirty fatigues, and typing to you while hearing the happy sound of static in my ears.



I hung around operations today, trying to find a local flight so I could go up with it. But no soap. I haven't got a ride yet. All the locals seem to take place when I'm on duty, and I can't leave the job to go up. But I'm still trying. I'll hit one yet. I went over to the hangars, and walked around the different ships, sort of feeling them over, to get to know them better. I'm like those kids who're always yelling at each other, "what's that car, Eddie, I betcha donno, it's a Chevvy, ain't it?" I have to know what every ship is, its name and number. So I look at 'em all I can. In the towers I have the binoculars with me and my aircraft identification book, and every time I'm not busy, I gander the ships on the ramp and check my guess against the book. Down below today I had the chance to look them over leisurely, and see the smaller points of difference. I crawl all around 'em, and sit in the pilot's spot, making like I'm handling the job. Ah, it would be lovely if I could.

Two hours of that and I wandered over to the sub-depot repair hangar to watch the ladies bang away at the rivets and stuff. In the rear I found a few sewing up tears in those leather flying jackets. I sat down on their table and watched them. The one near me was a little redheaded woman, about 30, I guess, skinny and small and quiet. She looked up and smiled, and we started to talk. I asked her about her job and how she liked it.

This woman is married to a soldier who's been in North Africa since April, in Ordnance. She told me about herself and him very quietly and seriously,

seemed to be glad to have someone to tell about it. They come from Alabama, near Birmingham. They didn't get married till he was at his Port of Embarkation, in Jersey. She saw very little of him all the long months he was in the army up to then, for he was moved all over the U. S. and she couldn't go with him. Finally, she went up to Jersey when he knew he was to go over, and they had a week there, waiting for his orders. He could get a pass each night from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and they'd have a few hours roaming around New York—they went up into the Empire State—and the rest to themselves. She loves him very much, you could feel it in the earnestness of her face, and the way she'd say "he" and "him"—she never mentioned his name to me.

She tried her best not to let him see what a hole in her heart his going away was tearing, but she couldn't stop the tears the last night. She cried all night and it killed him, but she couldn't make herself stop. She knew what a parting like that was doing to him, and she hated herself for breaking, but it was no use. "I wanted to die," she said, "I lived to marry him and be happy with him, and then he was going away so soon. I came back home and got this job. It's a little thing, I know it doesn't mean much, but I feel it's helping to bring him home sooner—and"—she hesitated, and looked up at me, and said almost shyly—"and you, and all the others too. If I didn't have this work to do, I'd be thinking and worrying about him all the time, and it would be too much. So I try hard to do this good. I hear from him every ten days, tho

once for three weeks there weren't any letters," and then she stopped talking, and I could feel her reaching back and remembering what those days beyond the usual ten had meant to her.

"Has he seen any action?" I asked. "Well, he hasn't written about any," she said. She was quiet again, and then blurted out, as if she shouldn't think that way—"You don't think they'd put Ordnance Men in the front lines, do you? You know, they load the planes with bombs and things like that, and that's not near the enemy, is it?" I said I didn't think it was likely. All the time she was sewing up the holes in the cloth edge of the jackets, the elastic stuff on the bottom. She'd stick the needle in the throat of her dress while she fished for the threads, and keep her eyes on the jacket most of the time, as if she were talking to herself.

Good night, darling. Sleep sweet and deep, and remember me in the dark. I love you with all my heart.

Lenny

## *I WAS THE GUNNER*

Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Doris,

Sorry to be so late in answering your letter, but soldiering is a full time job. However, that I am dilatory doesn't prevent you from writing once in a while—or do you insist on the old pre-war ratio of 1 to 1?

My term of service in this replacement center is speedily drawing to a close. By the middle of June, I'll

have a new address, but where it will be, I don't know.

I know very little about basic training in other branches of the service, but I've often wondered if it is as rigorous as what we have to undergo. Obviously physical endurance is one of the most necessary qualities of a good infantry outfit. It isn't necessary to elaborate on this. Well, General —, Commanding Officer at Camp Croft, is hell bent on turning out the best infantry in the world or killing us all in the attempt.

We haven't gotten it all in one lump—the hikes, etc., being gradually stepped up as the weeks progressed. Now that we are all through with the technical schooling, firing, classes, etc., the heat's been turned on and will continue to be until we leave. We didn't have too much at first because of interference with the book larnin' end of the program. But you should see us go now—night hikes, day hikes, morning hikes, afternoon hikes—one right after another and all with a full pack and rifle.

Last night we started at eight in a downpour. Rain-coats don't help much. We hiked cross-country for five miles, through creeks, cotton fields, woods, etc. At ten o'clock, after a ten minute break, we donned gas masks, marched through a gassed gully (tear gas) and continued with the masks on for two miles. At eleven we pitched camp in the woods (no lights allowed) and bivouacked for an hour. While we were pitching camp, gas bombs were tossed in the area in a surprise attack, forcing us to continue to work with masks adjusted. After fifteen minutes in the mask, the perspiration starts to run down your face, your nose tickles,

and the whole set-up is a bit uncomfortable. I would have given an even dollar to have been able to scratch my nose. We stayed in bivouac until midnight, broke camp, and marched home in the rain, arriving at the barracks a little before three. After we pitched our tents we crawled in for a rest, but the water poured through in rivers. During this problem I established two facts: you can't sleep soundly in two inches of water—and with a gas mask on.

This morning we did not fall out until eight o'clock, whereupon we marched three miles cross-country to the mortar range, fired mortars for an hour, and marched back in time for a one o'clock lunch. In the afternoon, we ran the obstacle course twice—600 yards of climbing walls, crawling through pipes, swinging over streams by ropes, and so on. You've probably seen it done in the movies. From now on we will do it three times a week. Now do you understand why I don't feel like writing all the time!

Incidentally, the mortar firing was a point of interest. We have had a week's instruction, but today is the only "live" firing we will do. Only one team fired in the platoon. I was the gunner. We took turns. A mortar is nothing but a tube set on a tripod. The shell is similar to an aerial bomb, fins and everything. The gunner sights the mortar—a complicated procedure; the assistant gunner drops the shell in the tube, tail first. A spike or firing pin in the base of the tube sets off a charge in the base of the shell thereby giving it the necessary propulsion. The shell loaded with T.N.T. explodes on contact. Our target was an old barn at

700 yards. We made a direct hit on the third round, and leveled the barn with four more, which is considered fair shooting. The real thrill comes when the fuse is pulled before dropping the round in the muzzle. From this point on, the first mistake is the last one. I was in a cold sweat the first two times I did it. As a matter of fact, we were all scared pea green. Instructions call for ducking at the moment of firing. But no one had to remind us.

As ever,

Ed

### *THE STEWART STUMBLE STUMP*

Dear Sis and Doc,

Currently there are two tendencies that are sweeping the Field out here, the likes of which are more contagious than the Zoot Suit mania of present day civilian males or the short skirt craze of the females of the Jazz era. Namely, and concisely, they are thus: (1) "The Stewart Stumble Stump," and (2) "Rodger." Let me explain before you abandon me as a case for cranial specialists. The first item mentioned concerns itself with a peculiar method of forward locomotion by foot, and the other with philology—that is, as a method of expressing oneself. But, I'm still not as clear as I would hope to be. Well, perhaps the origin of the first item would convey to you what I mean. You can do the "Stump" when you throw your shoulders away back, let your arms droop, kind of throw the pelvis forward, look at the ground constantly and generally

appear anemic at all times. The originator of the "Stumble" is Lt. Jimmie Stewart, and it all started just the other day when new regulations went into effect prescribing physical training for everybody—be you officer or enlisted man. Well, Stewart showed up one fine morning attired in a sweat suit and from that time on everyone on the post started to stumble around as if they just came out of a Turkish bath but overstayed. Already perversions and alterations have appeared. Some do it with an extra twitch at the hips, whilst others perform it with out-flanked toes. And you should see the WAAC's do it! Any day now, I expect Base Headquarters to issue an ultimatum making the practice verboten because it is impersonating an officer, etc.

"Rodger" is something quite different. English pictures always characterized the typical American by making them say "Okie-dokie." But the AAF has changed all of that. Now you can never hope to be classified a typical Air Corps GI, without saying "Rodger" to every query that is put to you. Not only that, but if some gal or MP asks you something that you care not to answer, or find it very embarrassing to answer, all you do is counter with "Rodger," and, depending upon the inflection of your voice, it would be quite safe to assume that it will get you out of difficulty. It is expected that some new sort of language will result from its widespread use, some bastard form of pig-Latin. I can just visualize a guy and a gal dancing—he saying "Rodger?"—she answering "Nawger," he coming back with "Dodger?"—or something like that.

I've got two guys waiting for me to go to a movie, so I shall stop. Give my regards to all.

Charles

## *AN INTERESTING DISCUSSION*

Camp Wheeler, Macon, Georgia

Darling Evie,

This has been a pleasant day. It was cold in the morning and we had to wear overcoats, but in the afternoon it was warm and sunny. In the morning our platoon policed (picked up butts, etc.). Then the company had calisthenics, which I like, then drill, then bayonet and dirty fighting practice, after that a movie on the organization of the army, then chow and out for the afternoon for rifle firing practice. We use no ammunition but practice positions and sighting. The positions are tough; sitting and kneeling positions require lots of bending and I'm gradually getting limbered up. Next week we go out on the rifle ranges and I want to try for sharpshooter or marksman. Of course, I'll try for the highest category—expert, but that's pretty hard to reach. I'll try anyhow.

There was an interesting discussion out in the field today during a break. Our Company leader, Lieutenant —, a nice young fellow from Connecticut, was in on it. I passed by and heard him say to Corp. H and Corp. F, both Southerners, "I'd fight for a Negro." I stopped as did several others. F said, "There's only one nigger I'd fight for and she used to work for our family." H said, "I'd just as soon kill a nigger as look at



him." The Lieutenant looked around and said, "How about you northern boys? What do you think? You went to school with Negroes, didn't you?" There were several remarks made and I said, "You know, F, it seems to me that one of the most unfortunate parts of the whole business is that the lowest, most ignorant southern white considers himself better than the finest Negro." I told him about George Washington Carver. And he answered, "Of course, any white man is better than a nigger." The Lieutenant said, "Negroes are fighting for you, aren't they?" H said, "Hell, no. I got 16 kinfolk in the army. There's no nigger fighting for us." F said, "The trouble with all you northern folk coming south is that you spoil the niggers. Pretty soon they'll think they got a right. One of these days, I'll sit down and find myself next to a nigger." There were a few more remarks like that and then we went back to work.

Today we were talking about Macon and one of the kids from Vermont said he saw nothing there but goddam "niggers." A nice Italian kid said, "What the hell have you got against those people. They never did you any harm. You don't have to talk that way." The Vermonter said, "There's lots of bad ones." I merely said, "You know, there are bad white people too. Does that make them all bad?" and he said, "I guess you're right."

I'm thinking of an article called "Portrait of An Infantry Platoon," a picture of the boys, where they come from, their views, backgrounds, etc. I'm taking a few notes but I have absolutely no spare time except

on Sunday and then there are a million things to do. Basic training is hardly conducive to writing.

I keep all your letters, my beloved. How can I destroy them? Soon I'll start sending them to you for safekeeping.

Sam

### *YOU DON'T WANT THE ENEMY HERE*

Dear Mom and Dad,

Will write you a couple of lines here this afternoon before I have to start getting some reports ready that have to be in by seven in the morning.

I am glad to hear that Jack was able to pass his test and make the grade for this aerial gunner that he has wanted so badly, because I have talked to some fellows who have been in the Army a long time, and they have gotten into something that they didn't like, and they don't get along with the Army, and it doesn't get along with them. But we all learn to like things that we don't like, but sometimes it is a little bit hard to learn the way the Army wants you to.

Mom, I can't see why you want to pray that all the boys in the service that you know won't have to go across. You seem to be forgetting that if some of us boys don't go, then we are fighting a losing cause. You don't want the enemy to get over here on our own doorsteps and do their fighting, and rape, and all the destruction they have been carrying with them, here, in our beloved country. Or do you want to leave it all to the other countries, and have them do all the suffering, while we sit in our own backyards, and watch the

other mother's baby be torn from her arms, and then its father killed, while we do nothing about it? I can't say that I agree with you, Mom, about not wanting any of us boys to go across. If it isn't the Lord's will, and time, for us to go, we won't go any quicker there than if we were still here in this country. So, please, Mom, don't forget that I don't want to die any more than the next guy, but neither do I want the next guy to do all the dying and the suffering.

Yours with love,

Norman

### *I GRADUATED TODAY*

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, I graduated today—be on the lookout for a package. It will contain, in the form of a diploma, nine weeks of blood and sweat. Yes, there are quite a few quarts of sweat—but nary a tear among them. All in all, it's been a lot of fun.

I really think this little town of Wickenburg is *swell*. "C'est la Guerre," or something—but we move on Tuesday. This time, Pecos, Texas. Instead of nine weeks Basic, and nine weeks Advanced, we will train in BTs for one month, and ATs for one month—then if everything goes alright for me, I will make transcontinental flights for 4-5 months in *my* "Flying Fortress."

Yesterday I was doing slow rolls and inverted flying when I lost my form I. Ask George what the form I is. It contains a record of the number of flights, time, etc., which the plane has made that day. Well, I had to pay \$5.00 for it.

Don't worry about us, "B" flight has enough spirit to lick and polish all the brass in the Army. Remember in Santa Ana, Capt. K—— said we were a bunch of "goldbrickers"—but he'd give anything to have us in combat. Col. R—— also agreed with him. That is how we first got sent to the Arizona desert. Well, they haven't broken us yet. So our next stop is Pecos. They can even send "B" flight to Death Valley for advanced training, and we'll still come through laughing at them.

Most of all the boys in "B" flight are going in for heavy bombardment, like' myself. Please, God, I'll be with them in combat, for I know nothing will ever break our spirit and that's what counts. As punishment we once had to double time almost three miles. Well, "B" flight did it—and sang while doing it. Capt. S—— saw it, and complimented us upon our spirit. He really likes us now.

Nothing more to write—I am just, your son,

Joie

### *GREMLINS AT WORK*

My dear Helen,

Just saw two rabbits playing on the lawn, and thinking what a nice neckpiece they would make, I suddenly thought of you. I haven't had a letter from you in a long time, so I decided to sulk for the rest of the afternoon.

The other day, we left the ground when the temperature was 95 degrees. In a half hour I was scraping the frost out of my ears, and by the time we were ready

to come down I was seriously thinking of building a fire in the bomb-bay. The next morning when I woke up, I felt as though I'd spent the night inside of a water glass, and the gremlins were driving tent stakes into my back.

They sent me to the hospital to see what was wrong with my mangled frame. A very professional looking doctor gave me a thorough physical examination by asking me "What's wrong with you?" He was annoyed when I told him I didn't know but was willing to guess. He chased me in to another doctor who led me to a bed, rolled two corpses out of it and told me to get in. Then he gave me an examination. "Say ahh" said he, and when I complied, he began beating the soles of my feet with a hammer. "Did you ever have rheumatic fever?" he asked, and I told him I had it years ago in New Jersey, "That," he said, "is where you contracted it." I pointed out that the plane was nowhere near New Jersey, and that I never needed to wear an oxygen mask even when I went to the second story of my house.

So they took x-rays, and a bird who wore huge glasses and looked like Barney Oldfield took the shots. He was so fussy, you would think he was taking a picture of "Whistler's Mother." Every time I look around there is a guy who wants some more of my blood. I call him "Dracula." He always keeps his face turned away from me, but I'll bet anyone his name is Bela Lugosi.

I suggested they kick me out of the army as a physical wreck, but they don't seem to hear me. Well, I'm still alive, because my name is still on the board. I'm

very tired, but frankly, I think the only thing I need is a couple of bottles of "Lydia Pinkhams," and I'll be O.K. again.

I don't know when I'm going to get a furlough. My pilot just got married, and they gave him three whole days for a honeymoon. When he came back, he didn't know whether he was in a plane or a wheel-barrow, and he cared less.

When are you getting your vacation? I don't think I can get away myself. However, I may run over to Europe this summer.

That's about all I have to report now, so I guess I will lay back and scream and groan—as that seems to be the custom here. Best regards to everyone.

Joe

## *DRIVERS' SCHOOL*

Dear Dad,

The Drivers' School that I completed a few days before we left Ft. Lewis was a very interesting experience. I shall soon have a drivers' license which will permit me to drive any army vehicle, the weight of a 2½ ton truck or smaller. We practiced on both the regular GMC 2½ ton trucks and the army jeep. I am very enthusiastic about the operation of both of them. Nothing that has been said in newspapers or magazine articles or in newsreels about the jeeps has been an exaggeration. They are certainly excellent automobiles. We drove those machines through the forests, knocking down trees, through mud, ditches, and the rough-

est type of terrain, and they never failed us once. Those machines seem to be capable of doing anything, and the satisfaction the operator gets is a real pleasure. We drove one blackout drive and one convoy. The blackout drive was certainly a thrilling experience. The only things the driver could see were two little red lights on the vehicle in front of him. We had to keep sight of these at all costs, for if we lost sight of them, we couldn't see an inch in front of us. At one moment, the lights would barely be moving; at the next, they would shoot ahead so far they were almost out of sight. Since we were driving over rough roads, roadless fields, and trails through the forests, a serious accident might result if we did not follow the exact path of the vehicle ahead. And, in order to follow in the exact path, it was necessary to maintain complete control over the vehicle and all of its gears at all times. It certainly was a real drivers' test.

On the final day of the test, we took a convoy to the Pacific coast. It was a nasty day. It rained constantly until we got to the coast, and then the rain turned to snow and sleet. This, too, was a good test, for we were driving in the worst kind of weather, sometimes at breakneck speeds. The Drivers' School days were probably the most interesting that I have spent so far in the army, and I was well satisfied when I learned that I had passed the course.

Well, Dad, I guess that's all for this time. Lots and lots of love,

Bill

## *EMERGENCY FURLOUGH*

My dearest,

I hope you're not beginning to think I have nothing to do all day except write to you. This is the second time today, and I'd probably write more often if I could think of something to say.

A brand new aircraft carrier is up here just outside my window. It is still being worked on in preparation for sea duty. Yesterday it sailed around the bay in a test-run. It certainly was a majestic sight. It seems unbelievable that anything so tremendous could be sunk.

I cornered the Lieutenant directly after mail-call, and asked him about my emergency furlough, after explaining our very important reason for wanting it. Let anyone try to tell me that getting married isn't a good reason! He asked how far away I had to go, and when I told him, he wanted to know how much time we'd need. I nearly said, "Are you kiddin'?" Actually, I told him about a week. He took my name, and said he would call Captain S—— (the company Commander) tomorrow morning to plead my case. If he is successful, I'll probably get five days, so don't waste any time about your end of the things down there. Go ahead with all preparations—just in case it does come thru.

About my blood-test, there is nothing I can do about it here, but I understand that I can get a waiver, or something to that effect. Go downtown with Mother and get a ring. And if you need money, ask Mother, and don't hesitate a moment. Make plans as to where you intend to have the ceremony, and by whom. Of



course, you can't make any definite arrangements until you know when, but you'd better be prepared in your own mind on all the essentials. I know it's a great task on your hands, dear, but you know how much I would like to assist if I could. I'm sure *you* are capable of handling it alone more than anyone else ever could be.

Really, our only important worry is—if only we can have those five days before the no-more-passes order comes thru. That's a prayer that keeps drumming in my mind over and over—at work, chow, or asleep. All signs point to such an order very soon. There's no question that we'll be embarking somewhere within the next few weeks—how I know I can't tell you. But once, and if only, we can have those five days together, I think I'd be ready to face anything, because I love you so, and always will, no matter what happens.

Take very good care of yourself for me. And pray that we get those five days!

Billy

P.S. Don't let this get around—but I think I'm in love. But, then, how am I supposed to know?

### *THREE BEDS AWAY*

Nona dearest,

And I was so sure that I'd be out of this damned hospital by now. Yesterday fever down to 99 degrees. This morning down to normal—and then this evening

back up to 100 degrees. They tell me it's not unusual, but that helps little. I'm so mad at myself that it alone could be responsible for the temperature.

Let me tell you of Jeff. Three beds away from me lives Jefferson English, descendant of slaves, a plantation hand himself until Uncle called. Jeff's lived in that bed for three months. You see, some few years ago, Jeff was driving a four-mule team which pulled an earth scraper on a levee job. The scraper hit a rock tipping over. The handle on that scraper caught Jeff, and tumbled him thru the air. One week after he was drafted, his terribly weakened back gave way again, and that's why Jeff lives three beds away from me.

The doctors always stop for a moment at Jeff's bed, and then move off, shaking their heads despairingly. That's enough to scare anyone, and Jeff's no exception. That's one of the times he picks up his little re-covered Bible and reads for a while, so that you can hear the low murmur of the song, but not the words.

It sure is easy to understand Jeff's need for comfort. You see, his God is a personal, close, immediate God. When it says that the Messiah is going to come, that when Gabriel sounds the call, then He's here, it means just that—that Jeff and all the others who have been worthy are going to be ready to take His hand and leave. Jeff is not a simple-minded boy. He's quick, and sharp, and thinks well. He's also in love with his God. And sure of Him.

Jeff can just about manage to painfully hobble, all bent over, from his bed to the bathroom next door. That's how crippled he is. During the last few days, he's

developed a hacking, tearing cough. Today, the nurse asked him how he felt. "My body don't feel so good," he said, "but I feel good in my mind."

All my love,

Charles

## *WHERE CAN YOU START?*

Hi, Puddin-Love,

The morning's as velvety as you, darling—soft and warm—and a breeze playing over my bare back, as I sit on the porch writing.

The firing range was lots of excitement. First, we saw a film on the pistol's use, then spent an hour taking the gun apart, and putting it together again, learning its nomenclature. We used dummy sighting sticks to learn the use of sights, and then went outdoors to practice sighting targets with fixed guns, mounted on posts. More lectures, and then simulated firing on mass commands. Finally, to the range proper, where we fired several rounds with the .45 semi-automatic, the army's best, and the world's, too. We fired at various yards and rates, at stationary and bobbing targets. I popped off beautifully right away, getting 44 points out of a possible 50, and astonishing the Sergeant instructor, the looey, and me. Boy, we were out on the range until after 6 p.m., and you sweat like hell in the hot sun. The pay-off was the deafness you get. My ears went flooey half way through, and by 6 I couldn't hear a damn sound. I'd whistle experimentally and

hear it in my head like an organ with many sidetones. This morning my ears are still ringing, but I can hear a bit better. How do those sailors stand the big guns aboard ship?

Listen to what just took place amongst a bunch of the men on the porch. There's a full page shot of some of our cemeteries in one of the weeklies. Beyond the center, standing among the crosses, is a Jewish star over a soldier's grave. Five or six GI's were looking at the picture over the shoulder of the one holding the magazine. "Well, look at that," he yelled, slapping the page. "One lousey kike! How in hell did he get in there!" "Bet there ain't many more of those there," said a pal. "How'dya know that's a Jew?" asked another. "Cantcha see that star?" said the first, "it's a 6-pointed star, ain't it?" "That's the work of one of them kikes. Imagine one of them getting in there!" And he hit the page with his hand again. "Hey, George," yelled another of the group. "He musta got there the way you got into KP that time. You were only half awake when the Sarg woke you, and you walked over to the mess hall before you knew whatcha was doin'!" Loud laughter.

I watched them for a few minutes till the whistle blew for their school formation, and they ran down the steps to fall in on the gravel. They were fooling around and punching each other and laughing. Where can you start with them? With the fact that Jews are Americans, and willing fighters against our country's enemies, like all Americans—Protestants, Catholics, Negroes, and all religions and nationalities here? They don't seem to realize what those crosses and the star

mean. They don't know the agony that came before death. Do they know why those men died?

I've got to stop now. I love you, dear.

Mike

## *MAKING A MULE'S BED*

Hy'a Sweetypie,

Just thru with K.P. and am I glad. Not too tired either because they called me out during the day to practice as gunner. I'm still there but I still stink. I get too excited and I'm not fast enough. You have to be very quick and nimble to do this job right.

But I did promise to tell you all about my adventures as stable guard. You go on at 6 p.m. and come off at 6 p.m. the following day. There are six fellows all together and during the night we change off guarding the stable. Now you must get the picture: There I am about 1:30 a.m. sitting on a bale of hay in one of the barns. There are about 100 mules and horses in the barn. They get up in their stalls or sit down or lie on the hay. Sometimes they bang against the food bins with their heads or halters. The wind is blowing and the doors of the big barn are creaking. There is a dim light overhead and it is dark outside. My duties are very simple. I have a long pitch fork and about every 15 minutes I walk from stall to stall and clean things up in certain stalls, piling the manure in a neat pile at the end of each row of stalls. If any mule gets tangled in his halter it is up to me to untangle him.

Well, as I was saying, I was sitting on my bale of hay

thinking of you when what do I see running past me down the aisle but a mule which had broken his halter and run out of his stall. I ran after him but as soon as I got him in a corner, he ran around me and ran down the other end of the barn. Well, after chasing him up and down a few times, I finally approached him very slowly and got him and led him back to the barn. That was the only event of the evening.

At 5 a.m., we get up and our day at the barn begins. First we wheel around the oats and bran for the animals. Then we let the animals out in the corral and make their beds. Yes, sir, each little mule and horse has his bed made for him. You take out the dirty straw and put in fresh straw and distribute it evenly. Then a bale of hay for every five animals. By this time, it is early afternoon and we start shoveling up in the yard. If it's a warm day, the manure has gotten quite dusty. Soon they bring around a big wagon drawn by two little mules. The wagon is about 6 feet high or more and carries about a ton. We filled two wagons. Of course the wind is always blowing so when you pitch the manure up on the wagon, it often blows back in your face. By the end of the day you have it in your eyes, ears, nose, lungs and what not. But it's all good clean fun and a hard day's work.

Tomorrow we go out on the rifle range and I hear that next week we will actually fire the howitzer. With me aiming it, they had better clear everybody out within a 50 mile radius.

All my love to my dearest, sweetest one.

Daniel

## *I CAN EVEN GET MARRIED*

Hello Dear,

Congratulations are the order of the day. Just got a \$16.00 raise per month. Typed myself up a promotion yesterday to the rank of Corporal. Two stripes, which look so bare on the arm, I am not even going to wear them. But bigger and better things to come—with good luck. Commander sat me down at his desk Tuesday and almost bowled me over with this question: “How would you like to be 1st Sergeant?” 1st Sergeant, being the guy who *runs* the entire Company, draws about \$114.00 a month (3 stripes on top, 2 on bottom, separated by a little diamond insignia). I naturally said “Yes,” I would.

He told me he liked the way I took hold of things and thought I would make a better 1st Sergeant than those he had there now. It works out something like this . . . As our outfit is broken up and sent out on “cadres” to different divisions, the Commander promotes men to the various jobs open. These in turn are OK’d by the Battalion Commander. Our Company Commander told me he wanted to see me get a 1st Sergeant’s job on one of the “cadres,” and that he was personally going to speak to the major on my behalf. Rookies like me just don’t get those kind of jobs. You have got to be in the Army a while and usually you have to come up from the ranks. How am I doing, babe?

Anyway, it’s something to look to and if it doesn’t pan out, I still have my Officer’s Training. Would like

to be a 1st Sergeant though for a while, and absorb some army life in that way. Why Gosh! I can even get married on that kind of money. You get about \$30.00 extra per month for quarters allowance.

So you sold your car! Well, good luck! I'm sure you'll miss it at first and maybe always. But you'll probably be easier in mind now that it's settled one way or other. If you ever want a ride in a jeep, come down here and I'll give you a ride. One of them in our Company has been jointly assigned to me and some other fellow.

Hope you are having a swell time. Everyone should get as much out of life as possible these days.

Bernie

## *MY SAND, MY DESERT, MY COUNTRY*

Somewhere in California

Dear Sister,

Mama has told me that Slim will be leaving for the Army. I wish I were home to see him off too. To be there with the rest of the family. Last nite, while at the open air movies—just a small screen and projector in the middle of the desert—I drifted from the show and wondered why I was in the Army. I ran some of the worthless sand through my fingers and said with pride, this is my sand, my desert, my country. I could just as well have been standing on Dorrance Street and said the same thing. My doings and things I gave up are small compared with what other people have done. But we must be prepared to give up and do a lot more



of these things that we thought couldn't happen to us.

I'm sure, Sis, that you will feel very proud that you have a husband giving his all for his wife and family at home. I know I am. Right now we are having a retreat: a ceremony which is held when our flag is lowered for the evening. The band far off ~~is~~ playing the Star Spangled Banner. Yet while the boys griped about standing it, there are many whose hearts are pounding. Why? It all goes back to the folks at home. I'm positive, really feel sure, this thing won't last but a few months longer, and when Slim is back with the rest of us, he too can throw out his chest and swap stories about the Army. I'll close now. Good luck to you all and don't worry.

Your brother,

Bob

### *BEETHOVEN, DREISER AND SEX*

Camp McCoy, Wisconsin

Hello Angel,

Fighting the war has, so far, been a pleasant and worthwhile experience for me. Our assignment here at McCoy has been primarily for physical conditioning before we start our real work and they have really been putting us thru the ropes: hikes with full field packs (which include everything but our bunks), obstacle courses such as you've doubtless seen Commandos training on in the movies, daily calisthenics and drilling, etc. All of which makes me so goddam healthy that once I get a moment of freedom on an unsuspecting

public, Uncle Sam will have to be responsible for the results.

And then the clime has been wonderful. After all, people pay tidy sums to vacation in Wisconsin and here am I, getting paid to frolic among the pines, the spring flowers and the gurgling brooks.

And the men I am with are, I think, the best you would be able to find in the Army. As I may have told you, they are all linguists, lawyers, professors, writers and others of some education and culture so that, whereas the average barracks talk turns on whiskey, baseball and sex, here it is more likely to turn on Beethoven, Theodore Dreiser and sex. Sex, of course, is the lowest common denominator and the leit motif thruout the Army. I'm just about the only single man in my group, so I am modestly silent and a gentle blush plays about my pristine brow when woman is up for discussion. Certainly, however, being with a group of men of this caliber makes this phase of my training much more enjoyable than it might otherwise be.

I miss most of all my time spent reading and writing. To read some current periodicals of news and comment takes just about all the time I have free, altho I have read a couple of books and am currently stealing time from work and sleep to read the volume of Thomas Wolfe's letters to his mother which was compiled recently. As for writing, not only are the time and place restricted, but the musing and contemplation which my feeble afflatus demands are practically impossible to attain. So far I have conjured two, I think, rather good story ideas and hope some week-end

to get into a nearby town, retire to a hotel room (no, smarty—I mean *alone!*) and compose at least one of them. Perhaps some magazine will be ashamed to send a rejection slip to a service man.

In any case, Angela mia, do let me hear how you are; well and happy, I sincerely hope.

Norm

## *ALLIGATOR STEW*

Florida

Dear Helen,

Today I am celebrating my sixth month in the Army! All I have to show for those six months is three inches off my waistline, a pair of flat feet, a red face (Florida sun—not dirty jokes), and a terrific ambition to think and always be one step ahead of the 1st Sergeant.

On graduation day they threw verbal bouquets at us, told us how helpless the plane would be without us, called us the ears and heart of the planes, and said that as radio technicians (this with a sneer which I thought at the time was a proud smile) we would be catered to more than any other branch of the service. I sat back in my seat having visions of 1st Lieutenants rushing to carry my bags and making sure I was comfortable, etc.

So, we left Chicago and here I am in Florida. When we arrived at this field we were pleasantly greeted by the 1st Sergeant who said he didn't care who the †\*!''†\*''! we were, or where the ||X§!\*''X\* we came

from, and that from now on we would do things his way. Any questions? Good!

I had to learn Army life all over again after living like a gentleman at the hotel in Chicago. When I drew bedclothes here, I got one clean sheet, one dirty sheet, one clean blanket, one dirty comforter and a pillow case with a big hole in it. It is a rule of the Army to change bed linen once a week, but I guess if we want to change, we boys will have to change with each other. I think that's the only change we will get as the field has no laundry.

Anyway, they dragged us off to be lectured by the medical officer and Chaplain. They told us we were to be restricted to our barracks for one week except for those few hours (10 hours daily) that we would be drilling. The only excuse from drill is to get a hair cut or go to the personnel office to see about bonds or more insurance. I now get a hair cut every other day, and it's good practice to check up on insurance every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

We eat our breakfast while you are still in bed. The mess hall is a modern type, fully equipped with six cups, a bowl, three spoons and a fork. They are trying to get an appropriation from Congress for a couple of knives, too. You have to knock down at least three men to get one of the cups and you have to fight six more to keep it. If you don't get a cup, you drink coffee out of a preserve jar.

The other morning we were awakened by a shot and a struggle in the swamp across the street. Pretty soon the mess sergeant came out dragging an alligator be-

hind him. I figured he would sell the hide and thought no more about it until at noon time when they served us what looked like a woman's hand bag chopped in small pieces. My suspicions were confirmed when I stuck my fork in it and it snapped back.

We are in small bungalow affairs made of white stucco. They are pretty nice and are quite roomy, with eight men in each one. They told us that they wanted us to feel as if it was a home and not a barrack, so we are going to see the CO tomorrow about a house mother, because everyone knows that home isn't home without a mother. I know of a nice eighteen year old redhead with a "motherly" face!

Most of the truck drivers here are women. The field and ranges are spread all over the place and they take us back and forth by truck. We had a nineteen year old girl drive us to the range the other day. Someone made a remark that she looked sweet enough to eat. No one seems to know what happened, but she disappeared on the way home and now all the boys are walking around with toothpicks in their mouths.

Flash! We were just told we could go to the movies tonight because we made a good showing today. So, goodnight, Helen, my love, and write me soon.

Joe

### *MY FIRST ARMY FLIGHT*

Santa Ana Army Air Base, Santa Ana, California

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, I had my first Army flight today. There are

five students per instructor. Our instructor took us up one by one. I was the last one to go up. We were scheduled for 30 minute flights. All we were to do was get the "feel" of the stick and follow through on turns, etc.

When my turn came he asked me whether I'd like to take the stick or not. Naturally I jumped at the chance. I then started the motor and taxied out to the take-off zone. When we got the "green light" I gave the stick to the instructor, Mr. H——, and he took it off (the plane I mean).

We flew to 5000 feet. Mr. H—— signalled me to take the stick. Gee! it sure is a lot easier than I thought. He told me to experiment with the controls. I did! On my first attempt at a turn I had the nose too low and before I knew it the horizon was gone altogether.

Mr. H—— was very patient. He told me to relax. I did. After that I was doing shallow, medium and steep banks to both the left and right. Straight level climbs were demonstrated to me and I did them. The same with glides. I liked the gliding turns, they are a lot of fun.

Once the instructor took the stick over. I was looking all around at the other airplanes. All of a sudden the airplane seemed to leave me. Then with a slam it hit me in the seat and left again. I looked into the mirror at the instructor. He was laughing at me—so—I laughed. With that the controls were mine. I noticed the instructor looking around so—I did a few dives and zooms. He really appreciated the fun. He smiled in the mirror. When we got down he said that he was

glad to see that I had confidence in myself. He was referring to my dives and zooms.

To sum it up—instead of 35 minutes I got 44 minutes. Instead of just getting the feel of it, I learned shallow, medium, steep and gliding turns. I also learned glides, climbs, dives and zooms.

Well, it is now 9:00 and we go to bed at 9:10 here so—I had better say—Good-night,

Joe

### *PREXY ROOSEVELT'S VISIT*

Fort Riley, Kansas

Darling,

My first week of basic training is now history. Looking back on it, I just brush my finger nails softly on my OD blouse and say in depreciating manner, "T'weren't nawthin'." But the fact is I have "hip-hup-hopped-hawed" all over this ruttin state, and believe me this army business is a tough life. Last week was probably the toughest week I have ever lived through. Guys passed out by the dozens. This Kansas sun and Kansas dust are strictly from another planet. What it's gonna be like in June or July, God knows. The dust gets into your eyes, ears, hair, pores and mouth, and after a twelve mile hike (3 miles of which is double time) your tongue is like a big ball of cotton. I've seen kids start to bawl and topple, and when I think this is only the first week, and probably the easiest, I look forward to the future with just a little trepidation.

I have many interesting things to tell you. Prexy

Roosevelt is paying us a visit tomorrow (Easter Sunday) and the brass hats are scurrying like mad. The trouble is, they're making us hop, too. Yesterday, after 12 hours drill, calisthenics, rifle practice, hand to hand combat, parade, etc., etc., they made us scrub down the entire barracks with brooms, mops, GI soap and water. The goddam barracks looked like the deck of a battleship on the night of good Friday. Today we policed the area clean of everything that didn't grow or wasn't nailed down. No sooner were we dismissed than the order came to scrub 'em down again for the President. This is no way to spend Saturday night. I just got through scrubbing the coal bin, and I just can't conceive of him inspecting my little coal bin tomorrow. He'll probable shoot past in his automobile, and for this we scrubbed six hours.

We had some interesting classes this week. They included rifle (taking a Garand apart, assembling it, cleaning, and shooting); hand to hand combat (this was the most interesting) and infiltrating the enemy's lines (the most grueling).

In hand to hand combat, they teach us how to kill a man with just your bare hands. It's amazing how comparatively simple it is. I can kill a man half a dozen different ways now without a weapon. I won't go into the gory details, but for a mild little feller, I'm getting to be a hell of a guy.

In infiltration, we have to crawl on our bellies in such a way that the enemy's machine gun fire can't touch us. This is a course that can only be described as a complete, and unadulterated bitch. Every time I hit



the ground I land on a boulder. And when I crawl forward I swallow all the dust in the dust bowl. Then the corporal hollers "charge!" and in we go, broken-field running like a bunch of scared jack-rabbits, and finally flat on our faces again.

I'm in good shape, but every once in a while I start dreaming of home and you and everything, and the Lieutenant starts screaming bloody murder on account of I have completely screwed up the drill. As a result, I have been in the kitchen twice, scrubbed the orderly room and have latrine duty coming up. Of course, it's my fault so I can't complain, but at the time I wanted to try out some of the hand to hand combat methods. You can't dream in this outfit. I am living proof of that statement.

Love to you, sweet,

Ike

## *NO OFFICERS WERE PRESENT*

Dearest,

It's 8:00 a.m. We're somewhere deep in the heart of Texas. We left Louisiana yesterday, at 3:00 a.m., and have been traveling ever since.

I must tell you about a wonderful experience I had the other day. The battery was up in the motor part, monkeying around, just marking time. No officers were present, and our work of loading the flat cars wasn't to start until the next day. I looked around and found one man whom I had heard say he wanted to learn how to gun, and worked with him for an hour or so on the gun sight. He caught on very quickly. I hadn't been on

a gun myself for a long time, and while showing this particular fellow the general idea, I noticed a number of interesting and useful things about the gun sight and other parts of the mechanism that I could now understand as a result of my instrument work.

You see, there are certain connections between the gun mechanism and the instruments I work on that, if explained, can be very useful to both gunners and instrument men. I decided to try an experiment, and asked a few of our best gunners if they would like to learn how to gun—kiddingly. They laughed until I asked them a few questions about their own work that they couldn't answer because they had been doing this work mechanically—not really knowing why. They became interested, and we sat down on the ground, using the dirt to draw diagrams in. In about ten minutes, most of the battery was gathered around, including drivers. I tried to simplify everything—explained *why* the officer in charge gives certain commands to the guns, *how* we know where the target is, how a gunner can save time, how the instruments work (not just academically), but as related to their own jobs. Everything was drawn in the dirt with a piece of wood. Dead-heads and jerks, and men who never said a word began to ask questions thick and fast. Nobody walked away—and this went on for almost three hours.

Many men came over to me later and asked for more information. If things are explained with patience and care—if words are defined, instead of just slung out, with half the men not knowing the meaning of a particular word, if a man's curiosity is aroused, if he is

spoken to *directly* and kidded out of his shell, if humorous incidents in connection with their own work are recalled to mind, they will listen and stay and learn.

I love you very much—I have never felt so close to you.

Johnny

## *A FEELING OF SOLIDARITY*

Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Dear Folks,

I've been thinking about the Army art program I wanted to take a crack at. I still might make the attempt, but somehow I don't feel right in doing it. I've worked and trained with these guys for a long time, trained for the ultimate purpose of fighting together. We have a certain feeling of solidarity that comes from the year we have spent together. Of course, I still want to draw and I know that the time I spend soldiering isn't helping my drawing any. But somehow soldiering seems more important right now.

If I'm to be an artist I'll probably be a better one after having been a good soldier. The manual skill is such a small part of art anyway, and that's the only thing I'm losing. I'm learning a lot of things you don't find out at a drawing table or easel, and I am sure that in the long run, I'll be thankful for the experiences I'm sharing with all the other guys in uniform.

Sometimes I feel that I've lost my identity as an artist completely. If I've lost it, then I've found a new one, for I'm proud of my present skills as I was of the

others I haven't practiced for so long. When the world reaches the stage when a guy like me can make his pictures in peace—I'll start making pictures again.

We don't get anything we don't earn, and I guess that the peace we dream about is going to be earned the hard way.

So long,

Milt

### *BACK TO PROSPECT PARK*

Alice darling,

11 a.m. at the USO. I just came in with Larry Brooker, and a new friend, Chet, who is a Polish boy from Jersey City. Chet is an older man—about 28, I guess—and a very nice guy. He's in my new outfit. We're all writing letters now.

Brooker, who is from Minnesota, has a big problem, which is, incidentally, quite prevalent. His girl back home wants to get married (to him). He doesn't know what to do. He's afraid of it, now that he's in the army. She wrote him that if our forefathers could go through what they did on our wild frontiers, she could live in Leesville. She sounds good, and Brooker is good, too—he has a real understanding of what the issues we're fighting for are. But he says that if our forefathers had seen Leesville, they would have gone back home immediately.

There's some really good music coming over the radio here, and the club is quiet and cool. I can even hear some birds chirping outside—a rarity. I wonder

if you noticed, while you were here, the almost total absence of bird life. A soldier from Brooklyn commented to me about this the other day. He claims that the birds took one look at Leesville, and flew back to Prospect Park.

Even around this country of dynamite-blasted tree trunks and swamp, the spring green is rich and lovely. Right now I'm imagining with pleasure, not pain, mind you sweet, that you and I are going to the zoo in Central Park, loaded down with peanuts. Coming from camp to Leesville on the bus, you can see small flocks of young sheep and goats. I remember how much pleasure these small animals always give you, and then I feel good all over.

Here I've gone two pages already, and I haven't yet told you how much I love you, dear. The truth is that I really can't. You'll just have to take a deep breath, close your eyes, and imagine it as hard as you can. And I'll bet you won't even come close.

Everyone who has met you keeps paying you the highest compliments, even Ford. You're "charming," "awful pretty," "awful nice," "swell," etc. I just agree with everybody, and accept all remarks and compliments with the greatest aplomb. Anyone who has met you, and doesn't congratulate me, I put on my S—List. Definition: S—List is a term used for a mental listing of guys you've got it in for, for one reason or another. You may add this to your already amplified vocabulary, at no extra cost.

I love you,

Jim

## *A BARRACKS MEETING*

Hello my Ol' Peach-softness,

Writing you yesterday about coming out to visit me put me in a whirl of anticipation. Mac says I should give you a direct order to come, speaking as a non-commissioned officer. And since the troops have to understand an order, I can explain to you that I need you for my morale. And remember the slogan, everything for the army, first and first!

Every time I've been away from the barracks, especially overnight, there's been a lot of hell raised by the wiseguys. Beds hurled down the stairs, linen torn and filthied, gravel taken from the walks and slipped into mattresses, etc. So this morning I called a barracks meeting, and when everyone was there, made a little speech. First time I ever did anything like that, and I thought I'd be nervous and kneeknocky. I thought of what to say, and how, in bed, just before falling asleep. And, luckily, it came out of my mouth pretty much as I'd rehearsed it to myself. First, I cited all the crap that had been going on, and then I said it had to stop at once. I explained why rules are made, for the good of the greatest number, and showed how it was always a few guys who disturbed the majority. I spoke of how at home they had to respect the privacy of their family if there wasn't to be war inside it. And I pointed out that the barracks is not a private hotel room that you can mess up all you like. It's cooperative living, and the rights of everyone in the outfit have to be considered. I said I went into all that because from

now on any offender will be turned in to the looeey for squadron punishment, and I did not want any man punished for breaking rules he didn't understand, or for doing something he didn't know was wrong. I asked for questions or comment, and there were none. So I dismissed them. It took only ten minutes, and I hope it made a dent. Mac said he thought it was O.K. So far, four hours later, the place has been a model of good conduct, but we'll see how it took.

I swear like a so and so when I talk around here, and I guess I did while talking to them. It isn't necessary, of course, but the army habit gets me the minute I step inside the gate. I find it doesn't carry over outside. I can turn it off without even thinking about it. Anyhow, it sounds like anybody else, so I guess it doesn't hurt. In spite of George Washington's famous order to his men!

Otherwise, love, nothing more to say now.

Mick





,

## *II—On the High Seas*



## *OUR NAVY IS A SOLID OUTFIT*

Dear Mother and Father,

I am in a period of transition right now, being not yet settled aboard my ship but rather awaiting orders to go where and when. My actions are shrouded in mystery, and the mystery is perhaps deepest to me. It is all very interesting, however, and through it all I keep gathering the impression that our Navy is a solid, intelligent, well-run outfit. There is confusion in the minds of some of us, but that seems to be according to plan.

I have been thinking to myself how anxious I am to see this whole mess cleaned up so that I can return to civilian life. Then I ask myself just what would be so wonderful about a "standard run of the mill existence." What I'd like to get is a sense of fulfillment, through work, through love, or through some sort of accomplishment, but I have a feeling that I don't know where to look for it. I don't think most people know where to look for it either. I am sure most people don't find it. Even Professor D, who has led a life of extreme usefulness to other people occasionally gets a sort of look in his eye and talks about doing something great—and then a second later says of course now he's too

old. I want to come home and find a girl. And I want a job that will make me feel as if it were extremely important to the world that I do it.

You will probably still be preoccupied with Thanksgiving when this reaches you, and Thanksgiving is still a highly emotive word in my vocabulary. Pumpkins and the whole harvest motif are associated with well-being, snow, reverence and good eating. I can imagine more profound aspects of Thanksgiving, thanks for a good year's work, thanks for a good woman, thanks for thriving children and a tight roof—these are acknowledgements I would like to make to God before I close up shop. The sooner this war is over, the sooner I shall eagerly take man's proper responsibilities.

Out of the blunders, the blindness, out of the fumbling and groping, there will come something good, and clinging to the tail of it will be me.

Your loving,

Son

### *SEA LEGS AT LAST*

Dear Mother and Dad,

I am writing this on the high seas, latitude and longitude of which are censored. Most of our mission lies behind us and we are now on our way in to port, perhaps to reach there early next week.

This will have been the longest I've been at sea, a stretch of practically three weeks, and it is about the limit to which I would care to be out. A few more days would be too much.

The redeeming feature of going into a port so far from where my heart lies, is all the mail that is no doubt waiting. These sheets of paper with the familiar handwritings are solace to a war weary soul. They provide the necessary shot in the arm.

No doubt you are anxious to hear an account of some of my adventures, but I assure you that the Sunday newspaper supplements provide more thrilling reading. On the whole, my experiences are merely part of a job to be done. I doubt that in future years I shall look back on all this with misty eyes, but whatever yarns I have to spin about the sea I prefer to tell them then.

The sea, however, fascinates me. Its varying moods make it a thing alive and its restless spirit is kindred to my own. The never ceasing undulation of the blue expanse, even in a dead calm, extends a rhythm to the ship like the living breath. But to the non-initiate the pitching and rolling are the sources of sea sickness and during rough weather sleeping might better be done in a cocktail shaker. Fortunately, I have my sea legs at last, or as the term goes, I am salty. Heavy rolling seas make bodily locomotion a bit of a challenge, but I merely assume my best rhumba stance and proceed down the passageway to the rhythm of one, two, three, bump.

I hope we make port by my Birthday, although frankly, at sea is as good a place as any to be on that day if I can't be where I want to be. But it would be nice to receive all those wonderful letters on my natal day, especially after being at sea for three weeks.

Goodnight, I'll write you as soon after I get in as possible. A kiss to Gail from across the blue.

Your devoted son,

Sydney

### *A GIFT TO MY NIECES*

My dear Debby,

Very soon you and sister Abbie will have birthdays. And I won't be able to send you gifts this year because there are no stores out on the ocean. Anybody knows that! What would stores be doing way out on the ocean? Nobody could get out there to buy anything. That's silly— isn't it?

But the ocean does have lots of things anyway. It has beautiful blue waves, big ones and little ones. And they are so blue! Some have white caps on them.

And the ocean has lots of fish. That's where the fish live. The ocean is beautiful, so most of the fish are satisfied to just swim in it all the time, all their lives in fact. But some little fish are brave. Or maybe they are curious. But they are not satisfied to just swim in the water. Do you know what they do? They fly! Imagine, fish flying like birds and airplanes! They dart out of the water and their silvery forms sail through the air! I bet they do it just so that they can see how beautiful the ocean really is. Because it couldn't possibly be as beautiful from down there as it is from up here.

And, Debby, you ought to see sunrise and sunset out on the ocean. I can't tell you how exciting they

are! And at night, the stars and the moon and the sky, they are oh, so beautiful!

Some day, I hope you will be able to enjoy seeing these things for yourself. Some day, you may take an ocean voyage. Of course, it will be different from mine.

My voyage is a special kind of voyage, a sort of business trip. When I come home, I'll tell you all about it. I'll tell you all about the waves and the fish, and the sky and the stars, and the business of this voyage. I can't tell you now. But here is a letter\* that I received from our President, and it tells you something about it. It will tell you more and more as the years go by. And it will mean more and more to you. It means very much to me, so I am giving it to you and Abbie. It is my birthday gift to my nieces for 1943.

My love to you, Abbie, Mommy, and Daddy, and all.

Your uncle,

Tim

*\* THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER*

The White House, Washington

TO MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES  
ARMY EXPEDITIONARY FORCES:

You are a soldier of the United States Army.

You have embarked for distant places where the war is being fought.

Upon the outcome depends the freedom of your lives: the freedom of the lives of those you love—your fellow-citizens—your people.

Never were the enemies of freedom more tyrannical, more arrogant, more brutal.

Yours is a God-fearing, proud, courageous people, which, throughout its history, has put its freedom under God before all other purposes.

We who stay at home have our duties to perform—duties owed in many parts to you. You will be supported by the whole force and power of this Nation. The victory you win will be a victory of all the people—common to them all.

You bear with you the hope, the confidence, the gratitude and the prayers of your family, your fellow-citizens, and your President—

Franklin D. Roosevelt

### *AMPHIBIOUS UNIT*

Dear Rose and Phil,

No doubt you're wondering what happened to me. Well, I just returned from an 18-day sea voyage on the blue Pacific. I'm not kidding. You see, being in the amphibious unit, we held our maneuvers on water. And here is the complete story—Oh yes, while we were on the ship we were not permitted to write. Thus the reason for my silence.

We left March 11th at 2 a.m. and boarded a train for our port. With combat pack on my back and barracks bag on my shoulder, it made me think of a group of refugees trying to escape across the border through the stillness and darkness of the night.



Upon reaching port we boarded a huge transport where we were ushered into what was to be our stateroom — compartments with bunks five high, where one never got in or out of the bunk without having someone's feet in his face or yours in his.

Well, no sooner did the ship begin to move when rumors began to float around that we were not coming back. One could observe expressions of sadness on the faces of many. I was, however, informed by my C.O. that we were coming back; yet when the convoy, accompanied by air and naval strength, entered into the ocean from the bay, I, too, couldn't help feel that we were severing our ties with the things we cherish and the ones we love—temporarily, of course. It sort of leaves an empty feeling.

After a number of landings on certain islands both at dawn and at midnight, we put into port at San Diego, which I visited on a six-hour pass.

The maneuvers were rugged—climbing down ropes from the sides of ships into small boats, being unable to land on shore due to the roughness of the sea; many times we floated around in the boats for five and six hours before landing—and when we landed, it was as if it were actual battle, with naval and air fire overhead.

You know, it seemed strange—the nights we would stay on the ship, the ocean seemed calm and cool; but the nights we would go out on a “problem,” it was always rough. One night it stormed so that lightning hit one of the small boats and caused it to split in two. Fortunately, no one was in it. I can't help interpreting

this as the revolt and protest of the elements against the disturbance caused by the burst of fire power, the revolt of the sea against the inhumanity of man to man.

Your brother,

Bezalel

## *A GUY GETS SILLY*

USS Rapidan

My dearest Elvira,

This evening I am on the "off duty" section and I have been sitting in the wardroom all evening listening to recordings of Harry James. He really has a mighty smooth trumpet. If he is around town any place when I get home we will have to try to get to dance to him. It's really a wonder that I don't get up in the mornings more tired than when I went to bed for lately all I seem to be doing is dancing with you. You can't imagine how tired you can get from dancing all night, every night, even in your dreams.

You seem to be holding up under it all right though. You never seem to tire and look just as lovely every night. I'll have to stop taking you dancing every night. I almost forgot your shoes are rationed.

Doesn't a guy get silly though when he's been away from his wife for too long a time. Why can't they be sensible about this war and fight it on a "home and home" basis, like a ball game. Then every one would be a lot happier. You'd have thought some one would have put this thing on an eight hour day long before this.

Take good care of the baby and don't let him forget me and I'll be a model husband the rest of my life.

All my love,

Marty

## *BURIAL AT SEA*

Hello Sweetness,

I really have something to tell you tonight—something I'm not liable ever to forget; a burial at sea.

One of the boys died last night. This afternoon at 3 o'clock, he was buried. Just a piece of board with the flag of the U. S. A. to cover him. Oh, but, of course, the inevitable canvas sewed around him. Did I say "just" that? Who could want a cleaner and more solemn way to go. The men of the destroyers of this Navy are rugged, sweetheart; they have to be, but I dare say that of the two hundred and some men there, there wasn't one of them who didn't have tears in his eyes.

We were all gathered on the foc'sle, the worst place to be, with the sea breaking over and the wind lashing humans and steel alike. But I swear to God, when his friends brought out the flag covered body of this kid, the water ceased to come, and the wind stopped howling.

That, my dear, is purely the sailor's way to die. No civilian, soldier or marine could ever have such a resting place.

The voice of the skipper, who has been to sea for fifteen years, broke when he said the Lord's Prayer. I, like most of the others, had tears in my eyes, and of

that I'm not ashamed. In fact I'm proud I could be there. That's a memory I could never, nor do I want to forget.

My dearest, write often, and remember I love you.

Earl

## *ONE GRIMY LITTLE BOAT*

Somewhere in the South Pacific

Dear Mother,

Recently, an early morning ride thru half-awake oriental streets; being hustled aboard a tiny steamer, bag and baggage, and the start of an expected trip unexpectedly. A bit disappointed at first that we were not to fly over. Glad, later, for the experience and the close companionship of the wonderful sea.

Previously my association with it had been over the rails of a towering Queen of the Sea; high above it and thoroughly its master. This time it was a far different story. One grimy little boat, a mere cockleshell in the midst of the surging blue black waters. She was built very close to these seas, and as we slowly moved out into the depths, these great rolling billows seemed to push their shaggy crests ever closer 'til it seemed we could reach out and touch each as it passed. Our little ship seemed undaunted by this show of vast power for she merely dipped and bowed to each like the gracious grey little old lady that she was.

Trolling lines were cast astern almost as soon as we departed, by many of the crew, until she looked for all the world as if she were trailing an old fashioned

train behind. Nothing was ever caught as far as I could see, so just passed it off as another of these strange native customs of the sea out here.

And what a crew. Made up of every specie of human life imaginable—Chinese, Malayan, Polynesian, Portuguese and Filipino—a Scandinavian captain, and a Cockney Englishman for a cook (and a good one to boot!)

Can you picture a husky, panting tug (almost as big as we) nosing us out of “Somewhere”, and pointing our stubby bow out to sea? During this procedure, can you see the fat, round-faced captain of the tug leaning far out of his window, his friendly Chinese face a study of smiles, squinty oriental eyes, and early morning perspiration? He is carrying on a bit of sea-gossip with some one up above us on our ship’s bridge. Finally we are cast free, and with a last good-luck wave of his pudgy arm, he swings away with a surge of foam, and boils his way back. We are on our way to a new land and new experiences.

Your loving son,  
George

## *STRANGE PASSOVER*

USS Beaumont

Dear Mother and Dad,

The ghosts of thousands of years of Jews were with me tonight—from the first refugees of the Bible’s fascist Pharaoh through two destructions of the Temple and through ages of wandering and persecution—

they were with me tonight at the strangest Seder I've ever had.

In the jungle heat of Guadalcanal and the torridness of the African desert, in the biting cold of Iceland and Alaska, and the foggy dampness of England, modern Maccabeans in the uniforms of their beloved countries gathered tonight to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from the persecution of an ancient fascism. The modern parallel is quite startling at first. It can be said, without fear of contradiction, there are no Jews in the ranks of the enemy.

When I look back upon all the Seders I've sat at, in my own home with my beloved family, and in strange cities with friends, I wonder if I could have ever dreamed that I might be spending a Passover on a U. S. warship, bound on a mission of war. Or perhaps, I should say, a mission of peace, because we are fighting for the peace for which each Passover we lift our voices in prayer.

One enlisted man (ship's cook, third class) and myself are the only Jews aboard the Beaumont, but we decided to spend the Passover with a Seder. At our last port of call we obtained two boxes of matzoh, and a hagadah from the Chaplain. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited aboard U. S. men-of-war, and grape juice was unobtainable, so we substituted prune juice for wine. The Captain said he would cooperate in every way possible to help us hold our Seder.

We got two chickens from the chief commissary steward. (I am the commissary officer, a recent appointment, so it was easily arranged). For bitter herb

we used stalks of chinese cabbage; and for parsley we used the celery tops. The officer's steward baked a sponge cake. Everything else was quite orthodox—to the salt water and hard-boiled egg. But lacking matzoh-meal, there were no knadels. That would have been something to see—the matzoh balls rolling around with the motion of the ship.

A bay in the Chief Petty Officer's quarters was partitioned off by hanging two blankets, and the Seder was set at a table large enough for eight. We had several guests, the Pharmacist's mate 1/c, a Protestant, another ship's cook, who is Catholic, and two Steward's mates who are colored Baptists, as well as the officer's steward. And to this gathering I related the story of Passover in English in answer to the Four Questions as asked by Goldstein.

The modern parallel was more startling. When I read "And it is this same promise which has been the support of our ancestors and *of us too*: for at every time enemies rise against us, to annihilate us; but the most Holy, blessed be He, hath delivered us out of their hands" I could substitute Hitler for the Assyrian Laban who intended to kill every Jew—root out the whole race.

And I read a prayer, which has been repeated for centuries, and today more loudly than ever "May He who maketh peace in His heavens grant peace on us and all Israel, and say ye, Amen."

But if I was startled by the modern parallelism, it was the myriad of ghosts of long dead Jews, visiting me tonight, who make me feel that this prayer for peace

need not be repeated year in and year out. We have the answer in our power now. The United Nations can make this Victory one of everlasting Peace, and build a world in which Jew and Gentile, white and colored, can live in peace, harmony and security—just like we of different faiths and races sat down at Seder tonight.

Good night, dear parents—God Bless You.

All my love,

Syd

### *MY LAST ROMANTIC BIT*

Dear Elaine,

We're having a great trip so far—wonderful weather, a good boat, and good companions. Every day is much the same—up early, a quick look at the weather from the deck, breakfast, then reading, talking or playing cards all day, interrupted only by meals or an occasional drill. Despite the words of my more travelled friends, who assure me that this is one hell of a trip, I'm enjoying it thoroughly. I could spend months here on the upper deck, leaning against our stubby mast, browning in the sun, reading. Am sure that you, too, would get this same feeling of inner contentment. There is something timeless about the ocean; it gives a feeling of eternal aliveness.

You would have enjoyed my last romantic bit played in the apartment. It was our last evening together—we were having a final Scotch. Seated close together, I took her warm hand in mine. She bowed her head slightly,



then looked me full in the eyes, her expression summing up all of the love that youth possesses.

"Before I leave, select something that I can give you, something that will keep us closer together no matter how far apart we may be."

She glanced down shyly. "There is something, but I am afraid that it is far too much."

"Nothing is too much. I want to give you anything you want."

"Then, Roger, please, your No. 17 coupon."

But, in many ways, I hated to leave Barbara. She has a *savoir faire* complex that was difficult to beat. Most important—we understood each other. But I have a good picture of her—I will pin her photo on the top of my native hut, much to the delight of the local natives.

Love,  
Roger

## *SCARING AND THRILLING*

Dear Folks,

Our last full day at sea, and we started off with the first General Quarters that wasn't for drill purposes. It came at 6 in the morning and was caused by the report of planes nearing us. Due to the efficiency of our machines we knew they were coming when they were still miles away, so we had time to get to our stations. But, alas for the exciting part of this eyewitness report, they turned out to be friendly ones, all of them sporting large Allied insignia on their wings and tails. Still and all it was a heartening sight to know that we

were so near land that we could have planes come up to guard us—not that we hadn't done a pretty good job ourselves for the past ten days. The battery was manned in four minutes, about the minimum time that it is possible to do it in.

I cannot conceive of anything more scaring and thrilling than the sound of the General Quarters bell in the middle of the night when everything is quiet about the ship and all is dark topside. You tumble out of your bunk still half asleep, stumble around looking for your clothes (unless you have them on, in which case you still have to look for your life-jacket which has an uncanny habit of going somewhere else from where you last put it before you went to sleep), swear at the enemy for waking you up at that time of the night, and swear because it's dark, and swear at somebody when they show a light.

Then, with your shoes untied, your pants undone, your life-jacket around your head in some manner, you head for the ladder to find that you have to wait in line to get up because there is only a small hole to get through. So you swear some more and finally emerge into the darkout of the outdoors where you see nothing.

All this while you realize that the enemy is getting closer and that you have been drilled in the lesson that the first to get a shot out is usually the winner of the battle. Summoning up all you remember about where the depth charges are, where each stanchion and pipe is located between you and your station, you try to run along the deck, swearing at people that hit you and

at nebulous objects that you hit. Movies to the contrary, there are no orders given that you cannot speak on deck or shout if need be.

Finally you reach your station, and from then on the story begins to vary. As far as my job goes I have to locate my man, who is already wearing the phones that I am to take, and receive them from him, and adjust them on my own head. Then I look around for the Captain and, for the next hour, proceed to follow him around waiting for orders. And how long did it all take—about three minutes from bunk to station, even with all the hurly-burly connected with it.

Love,

Bud

### *BLESSED MONOTONY*

Sweetheart,

I can imagine how you felt when you got to New York expecting to see me and I didn't show up. I sent you a Special Delivery, but don't think it got there in time. Darling, it was bad enough to have to leave you without warning, but to have you up there so near and not to be able to at least phone you was torture.

I'm not sure just yet how much I can tell you about this trip, but so far it has been an experience that I'll never forget, and an unusually pleasant one at that. The ocean has been exceptionally calm. Every day has been bright and clear with the sun shining down so beautifully that it is hard to realize we're in a War and at any moment a submarine or an enemy warship may come over the horizon with guns blazing and shells

raining hail down all over the place. In the evening the moon shines so bright that I almost read out on deck. In a way it is monotonous, but it can be called blessed monotony. As long as the trip continues in this uneventful manner, we're safe. I prefer boredom to bullets any day.

Some of these days you and I are going to take a cruise. I know you'll enjoy every moment of it. This one is pleasant enough under the circumstances, and I know that if I had you along and could enjoy the trip without the danger that goes with wartime travel it would really be wonderful.

Edith, to see the fellows singing and laughing on deck makes you stop and wonder about the unfairness and futility of the whole thing. In a few short weeks many of them will be in the middle of battle with death all around them and to what purpose? Some will come back and some won't, but to look at them you would think they were all out on a pleasure trip. Right now as I write, my stateroom is full of them playing cards and telling big lies.

Darling, I'm going to miss you like the devil, and have a pretty big start on that already. You can imagine what I think when I'm up on deck in the evening and everything is so quiet. The only sound is the rippling of the water on the side of the boat, and four or five of the fellows singing softly over in a corner. Some of them brought guitars with them, and they really work on my emotions. I've re-lived every moment we ever spent together, and, Honey, that mounts up plenty. I've even laughed over the quarrels we had, and been

sorry for the times we broke up. Think of all the fun we could have had during these times. Well, we'll make up for all that when I get back, and don't worry—I'll get back!!

Give my love to everyone, and tell them I'm O.K. The fact that you get this letter is proof enough that the ship got in all right, because it can't be mailed until we land. If anything comes up, just do as you think best, and I know everything will be fine. I'll write as often as I can, and no matter how long it takes for me to get a letter, you keep on writing. I can't wait until I get the first one. The more I get the better I'll like it.

All my love, your husband,

Gary

## *THE BATTLE WILL CONTINUE*

Somewhere in the Pacific

Dear Mother and Dad,

Happy Birthday, Mother, although I realize it can't really be a Happy Birthday until all your children are with you again. Let us hope that next year we will celebrate a real Independence Day.

I was sure the dress would fit, Mother, and that you would like it. I was undecided between the green or a beige, but I figure the green can be worn longer. The design is hand-blocked, which is quite an art here where the dress was bought. Most dresses and blouses are hand-blocked with a native design even if the garment is imported.

Received the fishing gear in good shape. Many

thanks, only I'm afraid you underestimate the size of the fish in these waters. The line is fine, if I am lucky enough to snare a fish light enough.

When we are ready for sea, we will go on special assignments of a different nature, which of course, I am not at liberty to disclose. This much I can say, it will be damn interesting duty. Of course we'll be out for long periods, and naturally I will miss the frequent mail calls and shore liberties. But on the other hand, I'll be doing some mighty fine work.

But we must not fall into the trap of assuming that a military victory over the Axis means a defeat of fascism. The political battle will continue, and, in fact, gain real significance when victory on the battle-field seems assured. The reactionary and isolationist forces will be able to attack more openly without fear of being branded as traitors. Then you on the home front will find your responsibilities to the cause of democracy mount and, in fact, the success of our newly won military victory will rest solely with you. The people of America are coming out of the cloud of confusion which so long surrounded them, but we must have clear thinking, honest democrats to lead us.

Gotta shove off now. Will write more later. Good-night, and God Bless You. I like your metaphor, Mother. Mind if I borrow it? "With the Pacific and Atlantic oceans of love,"

Your devoted,

Son

## *WE SINK A JAP DESTROYER*

Dear Dick,

The South Pacific

We left the first of September and were assigned to a carrier, I can't tell you the name because the Navy has not yet released it. She was sunk just a little while after the Wasp went down. We all thought we were going into the Atlantic but we headed west, to Hawaii. We lay over at Pearl Harbor for about a week, taking on supplies and awaiting orders, then we set off for the South Pacific.

We had regular patrols every day, and once we took part in the sinking of a Jap destroyer. One was reported in the vicinity and we took off with a full load. There were eight planes in our patrol, and I think one of us got a hit in. We found the Jap OK, and boy, we hit that thing from every angle except the bottom. Their ack ack threw up a heck of a mess—they evidently didn't take time to aim them, just pointed them skyward and let fly. It was too wild to do any serious damage so we just kept on. We let go all three bombs in one dive and we're sure one of them hit.

You can't see where your bombs go; the pilot is too busy pulling out of the dive and the gunner doesn't see until after they've hit. When the pilot dives he releases his bombs, and as we pull out and start to climb, the rear gunner (that's me) opens up with his machine gun, not that this does any damage, but it keeps their ack ack gunners under cover and gives us time to get away. The destroyer was listing then and her crew was going over the side, so we came in close.

Well, to get on with it, the day our carrier was sunk I was below decks, off duty. We didn't even get the alarm that we were attacked, other stations reported the same thing, no alarm was given. We didn't need an alarm, because when the first bomb hit I was bounced clean off the table into the corner. It took us about 1/99 of a second to get on deck and see what had happened. The after corner of the flight deck no longer existed; we could still get planes off though, and I'll bet we set a record for launching them. We got about 12 planes off before another bomb made us a helpless wreck. It must have been a delayed action; I heard it coming and dived under the closest ship. It hit square on the deck and went on through without going off, a second later it did though, and what looked like the whole inside of the ship came up through that hole. To top that, some of our ack ack shell started exploding below and we were ordered down to put a stream of water on them and keep them cool. Gasoline was burning all over the place. We had to give up though; I was burned. I got a piece of a shell in the side but didn't even notice it till a piece of shrapnel from our own guns hit me in the forehead, and I went out cold.

Someone picked me up and dragged me along into the water. They said we floated on a raft for about four hours before a destroyer picked us up. I was sent ashore to a hospital for a month, the optic nerve of the left eye was damaged. They fixed it the best they could.

Write soon, .  
Bob



### *III—From Many Shores*



## *BREAKFAST ON A BALE OF STRAW*

North Africa

Dear Alice,

Who would ever think that on New Year's day I would be eating my breakfast on a bale of straw in North Africa. I might say a few words here about the boat that transported us en-masse to the dark continent. This boat was formerly a Luxury liner that toured the world on pleasure cruises, the result being that we really traveled in class. In our stateroom there were five men sleeping in sky-scraper fashion, three on one side and two on the other. Of course when it became a little rough the top man came near flying thru the air to the floor, but that was O.K. because he wore a parachute (oh-yeah).

During the trip we encountered two days of bad weather. If you ever want to see mountainous waves come on out in the Atlantic when there is a good storm going on. The ships in the convoy look like rowboats on a lake and get tossed around as such. We were protected very well by the Navy with the result that I am able to write this letter instead of swimming around in Davy Jones' locker. So much for the boat trip.

Now we'll take this place called Africa. I cannot tell you just where we landed because the censor would not like that at all. You no doubt follow the papers on this great conflict so you will have to guess the place I am writing this letter in. Well, let's get on with it, as

the English say. The boat docked at the pier and we proceeded to disembark. If you could only have been there with a camera to take a picture of me getting off that boat you would have had a picture record of the funniest sight you ever saw. I was loaded down with the following equipment: steel helmet, gas mask, rifle belt full of ammunition, field pack full of toilet articles, two blankets rolled up in a pup tent, and a barracks bag full of clothing. Boy if you could only see how I struggled with this load. What a time—whew! All the men had the same thing to carry, so much fun was had by all. Well, after we got off the darn boat we found out that we would have to march to the airport because our transportation was on another freighter and they couldn't discharge this cargo for at least three days. Of course this news soared our spirits to a new all time high. Get me? Well we marched a grand total of seven miles thru the town to the airport. The streets of the town are lined with huge palm trees that offer a good shade from the sun when it is very hot. As we marched along the streets Arabs and their children followed us all along begging for gum and candy. This we handed out freely until our personal supply was exhausted.

These African towns are hot stuff when it comes to traffic. On the streets you will find an assortment of things. Along will come an Arab on his donkey going to town with some of the products of his farm, then of course children by the dozen, men and women on bicycles, G.I. trucks, and the local transportation system. On top of all this we have to march thru everything. So you see there is quite a variety of local traffic.

I got a terrific kick out of these Arabs and their donkeys. You never in all your life saw such a load piled on top of one jackass. Sometimes you cannot find the donkey for he is lost under his cargo. Then to top it all off the Arab jumps up on top of the poor animal and continues to ride on.

Well, anyway we finally reached the airport, where hot coffee was waiting and also a dry place to sleep. These towns here in Africa are very pretty to look at. The buildings are all made of the same material, which is a sort of whitish tan concrete. The taste and design in architecture are truly beautiful. The buildings are very modernistic and equal any of our best in appearance. However, the appointments inside are very poor and they have much to learn along these lines. After much buzzing around we all made a bed out of straw (straw is the thing over here), made provisions for working quarters, and a few other incidentals. Very shortly things were on the ball (that expression is Army slang), and operations were going along smoothly.

Please write as often as you can and tell me how you are and what's what in the good old U. S. A.

Sincerely,

Arthur

## *BROADCAST FROM TOKYO*

Somewhere in the Pacific

Hello Folks,

How is this for stationery? The Army finally kicked in with a little writing paper—a pad of 45 pages and

15 envelopes—so, you can see, I will have to ration myself pretty closely with it! I have decided that I will reserve it all for you folks and use whatever else I can get for my other letters—probably V-Mail for the most part.

Last evening there was a movie showing in another area on the island and having nothing better to do, this kid took a moonlight ride over to see it, only to find that the same picture is showing right here in this area tonight! It is O.K. though because, while most of the other lads are now at the movies, I am putting the time to good use writing letters. A recent change in the local blackout regulations make this possible—we can now use shaded lights between air-raids and it would surprise you to see how much more cheerful it makes this rock.

Now for the big news. Yesterday your wonderful packages arrived bearing the watch, flash-light, cigarette lighter, pen (which I am now putting to use), soap, citronella, cubes, and clippings! And yesterday was the day that I once again ran out of smokes, so you can imagine my happy surprise when two flat fifties also arrived in the same mail. Everything reached me in fine shape and I will never be able to tell you how welcome everything is and to thank you enough. It sure made me feel good though, and I do appreciate all you folks are doing!

We were discussing the clippings concerning the rationing back there and one of the fellows in the tent was heard to say, “Boy, we are lucky—we don’t have any rationing over here or any income tax (yet) or

anything!" And I think he is right—we read so much about what the boys overseas are doing and all that, but I really think it is you people back home who are making all sacrifices and making this war that much easier for us! That is why we want to see this thing end as quickly as possible and get this old world of ours back to normal again.

Fanny is correct to a certain extent about our being able to listen to the radio. Each Battalion has a small set, but in order to preserve them as long as possible, we are only allowed to listen to them at three different times between 6 and 8 in the evening. During this time, a station in California sends out special news programs to the troops in this part of the world. All this is fine—except for the fact that all the radios are now on the blink. We still manage to get a digest of the world news though through our Division News Bulletin. This comes out every day and keeps us pretty well informed on world events.

For a while, there was an outfit stationed near us that had a big powerful radio and they used to pick up many different programs. The one that was most interesting to us was a program called the "Zero Hour." It is broadcast every evening right from Tokyo and is beamed especially for the American troops in this part of the world. It really gave us many laughs and the speaker told so many out and out lies that it wasn't even good Japanese propaganda.

Sometimes the speaker would address all the troops in the Southwest Pacific and sometimes he would address us right here on this island, calling it by name!

It was interesting to see things happen such as air battles right over our heads and then listen to the outlandish Japanese claims on the "Zero Hour" about the very battles we had witnessed! Maybe Tojo thinks we haven't any eyes or something.

One thing of interest happened on that program shortly after we hit here. The speaker came on with his usual smooth American voice and addressed us on this island. He invited us to come out of our fox-holes for a while, light up a "Lucky" and listen. He then told us that we had better enjoy the moonlight now because soon the Japs were coming after us. He told us the date they were coming and everything, but so far they haven't showed up and that was some months ago. As an inducement for us to listen—they always played some American swing records and that, coupled with the laughs, made it an interesting program! Too bad we can't hear it any more.

Well, if I don't finish this soon, both you and the censors will think that I am trying to write a book. Once again, a million thanks for everything! Best to everyone and let's hear from you again soon. Till then,

Love,

John

### *JEEP DRIVING DETAIL*

Eastern Algeria

Dear Dr. A—,

The voyage from England to Africa was uneventful, although I was looking for the worst to happen at any



moment. Submarines must have been near us several times for I could feel the shock from the many depth charges as they exploded when dropped from our escorting ships. When we first learned that we were to leave England we wondered as to our destination. After days of nothing but water to cast your eyes upon I had my first glimpse of Africa as we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. Once in the Mediterranean, it wasn't long before I first set foot on African soil in the Oran area.

When we first came to England it wasn't long before Jerry paid us a visit. We would grab our gas masks, helmets and chocolate bars and run for a shelter. I was glad we stopped over in England instead of coming directly here to Africa. I certainly enjoyed England. I liked what people I did meet. Her countryside was very beautiful and picturesque. Her cities and towns were nice too but you could tell the effects the German bombs had upon them. Many vacant spots exist where the wreckage has been cleaned away. My one disappointment while in England was that I didn't get to see London, although I did get around quite a bit. I was lucky enough to get on a jeep driving detail. It was a two day trip. We flew to our destination and then drove our jeeps back. It was work in one respect but pleasure driving in another.

Some of us have had some pretty rough times since we have been in foreign service, but I am sure it is well worth the price to preserve the freedom and liberty we all so dearly love and cherish. After this conflict is over I hope some day to return to England and really

see the country, and maybe even to parts of Africa, but only after I have seen more of the United States.

With best regards, sincerely,

Claude

## *A QUICKIE THROUGH LONDON*

Somewhere in England

Darling,

Continuing “My Adventures in England” or “Ships, Shoes, Sealing Wax, and Stuff”—

Arrived at King’s Cross station in London, and off to a nearby Red Cross—a new one, and a beautiful, well-managed place. For a couple of shillings you can get a bed and breakfast.

A quick wash-up and then off in a rush, since I only had two hours drinking time—which I utilized with remarkable zeal and vigor. Funny thing about London, after eight or nine whiskies—it’s all blurry and fuzzy, just like New York—after eight or nine whiskies. All G.I.s head for Piccadilly Circus—huh, not even an acrobat.

Next morning (not even a head) off to cash your money order at the National Provincial Bank. The bank and other financial houses are centered on what is known as The City—a mile square area in central London which controls the economy of the British Empire. Messenger boys (age 50 to 75) look like bank presidents—shiny silk toppers, black cutaways and all the doings.

Streets in this section have wonderful names, names out of Dickens like Threadneedle Street, etc. Men on the street would approach us time and time again with "You Americans will be interested in such and such a building or church." All went out of their way to be helpful. But it's nearly lunch time and the inner man is howling. A bobby answers our inquiry for "a good restaurant and hang the expense," by directing us to Primm's, which probably served the cream of London as far back as Henry VIII. The food, though limited to three courses and even those rather sparse, was excellent. But best of all was Primm's No. 1 Cup. It's a secret preparation, the base of which is fine gin. This is mixed with lemon soda, garnished with a twist of lemon peel, a few leaves of borage (an herb), or a piece of cucumber rind. Ice well and serve in a silver cup. Magnifique! I understand it's exported to the U. S. Try it.

Out again and noticed crowds lining the kerbs (curbs to you) and informed by the ever-present Bobby that "Winny" was due along any minute. And there he came, preceeded by the Lord Mayor and entourage, all decked out in flowing and bejewelled robes. "Winny" rode in an open carriage accompanied by his wife and two daughters, both of whom are in uniform. He looked well—cherubic, as a matter of fact, waving and smiling to everyone. The quiet English cheered soto voce, but were obviously thrilled with the whole affair.

Then, with only an hour or two left for bus rides—the Marble Arch, Hyde Park, Selfridges, Oxford Cir-

cus, Westminster Abbey, Parliament, Waterloo Station, and my quickie through London was over.

All my love,

Charles

## *LOOKING FORWARD*

Somewhere in North Africa

Dear Mr. H—,

My first letter to you was written soon after I found that instead of seeing Bagdad, Flying Carpets, Scheherazade and the thousand and one nights, I was to have the dim lights of Cairo, the fancy inflection, the Oriental price schemers, the super-slums and slum dwellers that westerners are calling “the colorful native quarter” and a host of other undesirable things. Yet, despite all this, we got a splendid opportunity to see how this, the greatest city of all Africa and one of the greatest of the East, was able to keep within it the teeming maze of peoples—each trying so hard to keep its identity that even movie houses put the feature into four or more languages!

That was not to last for long. I attended a British Code and Cypher School and was introduced to the best that the Empire Cryptographers could offer. There, I had my first chance to intimately know the Englishmen and Australians and hear at first hand what they were thinking. A small number of us were fortunate to be assigned to the Royal Air Force and given a chance to travel with their field units for purposes of observing their methods of communication security.

With their western desert command units, I was to see the battle of Tunisia almost to the end. With them, I had my first opportunity to dig a slit trench as well as to watch the skies rain "brimstone and fire." There were even a few times when one would look beyond the horizon and the wierd light of the parachute flares and devoutly say "O Lord, be with us now, if only this once." It's then that men are at their best. They have ceased worrying of the greatness of their riches, or the power of their friends, and faced the stark reality that they are but small and humble parts of humanity clinging to life as by a hair in a tiny scratch in the surface of the earth.

As I look over some 2,000 miles of travel in the Levant and Africa, I feel as if I have learned more than I ever did in four years of college. Remember your telling me about your travels in England and France in the last war? I was then simply fascinated. Since then I have found out that travel does more than satisfy a wanderlust—it is deeply educational and broadens a man's outlook like nothing else. I now feel that a man who has never traveled widely abroad as well as at home, is unfit to have a hand in guiding the nation. Gone is the day when I would have considered a man's travel record as his least appropriate attribute for office. I consider the periodic movements of Churchill, Roosevelt, Willkie, the Chiangs and others as the best insurance for a stable world when this is over; the little mentioned movements of the leaders of the South American nations have proved to be of tremendous value in Pan American Relations; the same thing may

easily occur in world relations. By the same rule, I regret to see the leaders of Russia cling so closely to the Kremlin. It will indeed be a happy day when Stalin and his retinue journey to London, or Ottawa, or Chicago, or Washington for a meeting.

I'm looking forward to New England and all it symbolizes: a homey atmosphere, the peace of its green valleys and grey stone walls, a little stability, a private life in a world spinning less madly, a chance to set our own pace, to be among our life long friends, and above all to be back in that America we all love so well—that's what we are looking forward to on that day in God's good time when the armies of the earth shall clash no more.

Thus the time has come for me to close. I would appreciate your writing me a little about wartime Washington and especially about the newer trends in administrative law. It's been almost seven month since I said farewell to Old Virginny, and a lot must have happened since then.

With best wishes, I remain, very truly yours,

Edward

### *LAND OF THE POTATO*

Dear Sue and Bernie,

Northern Ireland

Well, here I come again trying to get a letter off to you—I tried to write to you last week when we were first given permission—but when the censor got hold of it he sent it back to me looking like a piano roll—it was so cut up! How in the hell can a guy write a letter that has to be censored?

I'm now stationed in Northern Ireland—the land of the potato—the land where everything is green including the natives! So called pretty Irish colleens—colleens who couldn't hold a candle to any gal walking down the main street of the herring belt! A land that's famous for its Irish whisky but a guy can't buy a shot of it up here for less than 1 crown (60¢). A land that has so many songs written about it by writers who have never been here—writers who are either morons or dope fiends. A land that must have had the best press agents in the world.

A land where either it's going to rain or it's raining—no wonder they call this the Emerald Isle, everything can't help but be green—the earth is so well watered! But still with all the complaints I have about the darn place, it's a beautiful land I'm visiting now—perfect farming country, rolling hills, fields laid out like checker boards all hedged in by yellow gorse (sort of a wild flower), houses built out of stone, ancient castles, and a land rich in tradition.

The British take their women into the Army with them. Wear uniforms and everything! Drive trucks—do all the clerks' work and live in barracks on the posts. I made a big mistake by not taking along a few pairs of silk stockings and lipsticks. A guy with a few cosmetics could wind up with a harem out here. As it is the boys are doing pretty good with what they had in their toilet kits, such as after-shave lotion, Jergen's lotion, cold cream and even a few lumps of sugar or candy! Candy happens to be the big thing out here. Can't get any and no girl could resist a guy with a couple of candy

bars in his hands! My ace in the hole is a can of salmon I found in my duffel bag. These dames get so little to eat I'm bound to score for that can of fish!

Six of us spent the evening in a small town nearby—had an interesting time visiting our first foreign town—that is, walking around and trying to mingle with the natives. I can't say that they seem to welcome us. They might warm up toward us later. The town might have been a page out of a picture book or a travelogue—stone houses on hills, houses that were built right next to narrow sidewalks on cobblestone streets, pubs, ironmongers, chemist shops, all holes in walls. Even went to a dance in the town hall. American music that was popular during the last war. The girls really haven't anything to wear—cotton dresses and no stockings. They could dance tho—oh yes! So far I haven't seen anything that would compare with the gals back home—everything out here is about 100 years behind times—our times. Even the art of picking up a babe hasn't been developed yet—no finesse. You just grab a gal by the arm and take off—no conversation and no time wasted! Just grab and pitch!

Well, so long now and regards to all.

Love and cheerio,

Max

### *PEOPLE LIVE DIFFERENTLY*

Dear Father,

North Africa

I just received your letter and I am glad that you are  
There isn't much new here. We just keep on taking  
well and happy.



orders and following the Nazis around. So far we have done all right.

Africa is a strange country. There are so many things that are different from our own. The people are friendly but you have to know a lot about them before you can really understand them.

We get some time off and then we try to make the most of it. I have traveled to a lot of places where I probably will never go again.

Remember, Father, when I was young and you used to tell me about geography and the other things? We never thought then that I would get around so much. I have seen a lot of our own country since being in the army and then I came over here, but first I saw London and other parts of England.

No matter where you go people live differently. I figure that every one is brought up to live in the most convenient way. That's the way the Africans feel about it. They live conveniently and they seem happy.

The happiest time they ever had was when the Americans came. They probably liked the British just as much but they really show us that everything is okay as long as we are around.

People hear so much of our country and we take it for granted that it is hard to believe that we are just Americans and not actually the super-race the Germans think they are.

Some day when I get back and everything is peaceful again, it will be fun thinking over the places I have been. It has really been an education in itself and all paid for, too.

The more we see of other places, though, the more we like our own little U. S. A., and especially Springfield.

Don't worry about me as I am okay and can take care of myself. The ones that should be worrying are the Italians and Germans because they are the ones that are really going to take it on the chin. After that if the Japs still want to play, we can fix them up, too.

Let me know how everything is.

Your loving son,

Everett

## *TWO YEARS SINCE BROADWAY*

Somewhere in North Africa

Actors' Equity Association, New York

Dear Friends,

I just received your kind gift and copies of both *Variety* and the *New York Times*. I don't want to say just "Thanks," because the word in itself does not convey my true feeling. When the curtain finally falls on an opening night and the house resounds with genuine applause, you just can't say "Thanks," there's a lump that sticks in the throat, a tear that floods the eyes—feeling that has no words.

It's been two years since I left Broadway and the things I loved. Three months or more since I've read or even heard a word about the theatrical world. The memories of that world never die. In the same way we who possess such cherished memories never leave that

world. Each word we read or hear is a breath of air from that universe. To be allegorical, I might say I had been suffocating until now.

Your remembrance and thoughtfulness assured me I had not been forgotten entirely, and that assurance reaches deep into the emotion, stirring it with a strangeness that makes words inadequate to express.

What odd twists life sometimes takes. As I lie here in my pup tent writing, my pad rests on a revolver—a weapon of destruction. Ever since childhood I wanted to make people happy—to make them forget, even if only for a few hours, their daily cares and worries. To thrill them, chill them, amuse them, entertain them left a gratifying feeling. It was worth devoting a life to. Now—oh well, I guess it's best not to think about it.

We've been doing pretty well down here—which you've probably read about. The boys seem to adjust themselves pretty quickly to the people and their customs. It makes them quite happy to find the natives so friendly and cooperative. The poverty of the Arabs is at times quite touching, and the men seem to enjoy the opportunity of being charitable and benevolent. They like the feeling of giving and sharing. It makes them realize more and more what a great and glorious country they live in and fight for.

Their giving away of things provides some amusing scenes. They howl at the sight of a little Arab walking around with pants made out of a blue barracks bag. Or some dark-skinned boy, with shoes four sizes too large, an overseas cap and long woolen underwear as

an outer garment strolling along the road, face beaming with delight as if he were dressed in his best Sunday suit. Quite a picture.

My candle's burning low. I shall have to bring this to a close. Say hello to all my friends and brother members. Give them my best wishes for a happy and successful year.

Sincerely,  
Milton

*THINGS I NEVER NOODLE NOW  
ABOUT INDIA*

*(with apologies to Walter Winchell)*

Somewhere in India

Dear Gang,

Hindus burn their dead, Mohammedans bury them and the Parsees feed them to the vultures. (Too good for Hitler). . . . That you see more hair-does on the males than anywhere else, each one representing a different caste . . . that the "blood" you see spattered all over the streets of the town is not the result of some gory local scrap, but "paan" or betel leaves chewed by the natives (and they can hit a spittoon at forty paces . . . that sacred cows seem to be fully aware of their status as they always choose to walk in the center of the road . . . that you take off your shoes in a Hindu temple or a Mohammedan mosque because the leather of your shoes is unclean as it comes from a slaughtered animal . . . that the Muslims pray facing the West and not the East, as that's where Mecca lies from here in

India, according to Rand McNally . . . that our British allies are pretty nice guys . . . that the weather in India is not unbearably hot, the afternoons here are refreshingly warm and the evenings delightfully cool at the present time . . . that the only snakes you see here are the pink ones that crawl around your feet after you drink some of the local rum . . . that the women preserve their girlish figures by working alongside the men here on all the heavy construction jobs. The balance displayed by a "ten bricker" (a gal carrying ten bricks on her head) would surely be a show-topper at the early bird matinee at the Paramount . . . that the mechanics and artisans here are very quick in picking up so-called Western industrial methods, and nothing gives me a greater kick than seeing some be-turbaned Sikh fixing up an intricate electrical system . . . that the caste system is pretty strong in India—a sweeper can never become anything else but a sweeper, a shoemaker's son must usually stick to his last, and such stuff . . . that we eat tangerines, bananas, grapefruit, tomatoes, apples, grapes, etc., etc., regularly, all grown in India . . . that the Hindu upon entering his temple rings a bell attached to the front gate to announce his presence to the gods and give them an opportunity to prepare for the reception of the faithful . . . that in Hindustani, or the language indigenous to all India the verb comes last like "the sherbet to me Herbert shoot" . . . that children in their swaddling clothes will smoke cigarettes, if you give them some (where's the SPCC?) . . . that Buddhism, which has more followers than any other religion in the world, was born in India,

but the vast majority of the Buddhists are in the other parts of Asia . . . that the Taj Mahal, most beautiful building in the world, is really a tomb and holds the body of Mumtez Mahal, wife of Shah Jahan, great Moghul emperor of India (what the hell is that guy in his spare time, a grave-digger?). . . . That one of the reasons that cows and monkeys are sacred in India is that the Hindus are firm believers in reincarnation and it wouldn't look right to go around socking your grandpa . . . that when you visit a Hindu home the women keep pretty much in the background (or maybe their husbands have heard of the Lotharian proclivities of the Yanks) . . . that the Yogi exercises are pretty darn good for body development (Lou Nova just has the wrong teacher) . . . that the average Hindu movie has more blood and thunder than seven Western serials . . . that here in India when you come to the bottom of a page, you usually stop typing, just like in America.

Your old,

Pal

### *DRUMS KEPT US AWAKE*

Dear Anne,

East Africa

I expect by now you have heard from home that I am now abroad. Well, I suppose you'd like to hear something about my experiences, but am afraid I can't say very much owing to censorship, but I'll do my best. In the first place, our convoy got through without any incidents, thanks due to the Navy, although there was

danger at times from submarines. Upon arrival at South Africa we managed to do a bit of sightseeing and sample some decent beer after the horrible stuff served on our ship. Then we were off again for the next port of call. We experienced some real steaming hot weather, when all we could do was to lie in our bunks and sweat and blame Hitler for everything. The ship's quarters were extremely good. We sergeants all had 1st class cabins with hot and cold water, etc., although some had been converted to take as many as six persons, still it was better than a good many had. Unfortunately, I believe the ship was attacked on the way back. At our first port of call it was interesting and amusing to see the antics of the natives, dressed in weird rags, paddling their little canoes and diving overboard for money, but becoming very disgusted if the coin wasn't silver. It was also rather nice to see all the ships illuminated at night in the harbour after so many nights of rigid blackout.

After arriving at our final port, we were soon entrained and passing through some very interesting country which swarmed with various animals, from monkeys to ostrich and giraffe, zebra, etc. We are right on the equator line, but, being over five thousand feet above sea level the breeze keeps the heat down, which is as well as far as I'm concerned because too much heat doesn't agree with me. Some parts of this country are very nice, with marvelous colourings, but where we are situated is typical bush and plain country, close to the hills. Although over two hundred miles away, we can very often see Mt. Kilimanjaro with its snow

covered summit, and in fact I have passed right by it, whilst on safari.

Christmas we spent very quietly, at least some of us did. We managed to get into town but as practically all the places were closed had to just resort to a cinema. After that we accepted the hospitality of the Lewises Club in Nairobi and had a free Xmas dinner complete with a bottle of beer. Still it was very nice of all those ladies to work for the boys over Christmas, otherwise it would have been totally flat. New Year was slightly different. I spent all that time on safari and on New Year's Eve we made camp near a small native village, which we had overlooked, and we little thought that these natives would invite all their friends and relatives to a song and dance party. Their drums kept us awake for hours. Can quite imagine the old days of cannibals, when they were getting the stew pot ready and making whoopee. We came through the Masai country, where they never wash—just rub red mud and sand in their hair and bodies and whose men are supposed to kill a lion before they're allowed to marry. Looking at some of the women, I shouldn't think it worth the risk, myself, but I suppose they think there's something in it.

Here in camp, we have two pets, a monkey and a dog. The dog originally came from Abyssinia and if a dog could be awarded campaign medals, he'd have a collar full. The monkey is a devil, often breaks loose and raids one of the tents, has a weakness for chewing cigarettes and toothpaste. Last night we had a terrific rain storm but fortunately all the tents were still stand-



ing this morning. We thought the dampness would keep the hyenas at home, but actually there seemed more than ever. We usually get a chorus of them each night.

Well, Young Anne, I don't think there's any more news at the moment. Let's hope the war news continues as it is at the moment and it will soon be over. I don't think there's much doubt about the outcome of it all now. Kindest regards and best wishes to yourself, Henry and Uncle George. Hoping you are all quite well,

Tom

### *A CAN OF CORN*

Dear Mother,

Somewhere in England

One day last week I wanted to play some golf, so on the advice of a lady at the Red Cross I headed for a certain golf course. On arriving I found there was no one there to play with, but a man soon found me a partner. He took me to the clubhouse. It was a beautiful place, more than 100 years old—they even had golf clubs which they claimed were over 100 years old hanging on the wall. They looked like shinny clubs to me. They immediately found some clubs for me, also a jacket and some golf shoes—nice people these British, very nice I should say.

Since I was all decked out, I decided to go out on the course and just hit a few rounds. I had only played two holes when an elderly gentleman came over and asked me if I would mind playing with him and his

wife, and a threesome it was. It was 4 o'clock when we finished, so they insisted that I join them for tea—you know it is sorta queer the way the people over here insist on having their tea, but we Yanks are sure getting used to it.

Met a Red Cross worker, an English girl, and after a little promoting I received an invitation to dinner. I believe that I felt more at home than I have at any time since coming over. When I tell you what we had to eat, you people over home should just stop and think how well off you are. The dinner consisted of beets, carrots, lettuce, some kind of stuff that looked like four-leaf clover (watercress, I believe they called it), spam, grated cheese, coffee and tea. I believe the dessert topped it all, it was bread and butter. Both were there but rather scarce. I took a can of corn along and, do you know, they never had had any, they even asked me how to fix it.

What I am going to ask you to send me may sound crazy, but I sure want some. Will you send me some popcorn? Think of the time I will have popping it in front of people who have never had or seen any!

Your loving,

Son

## *THE RIGHT TO RING A BELL*

North Africa

Dear Mr. H—,

Today is Sunday. The first Sunday after the Axis rout in Tunisia. The African campaign is over. To us

Americans it's just a victory. One of many to come.

I'd like to be in England today. To them it will really mean much. It'll be another glimmer of light, in a world dark for four years.

The church bells there will ring for the second time in four years. They have not rung for four years because they were to be the signal for the ever threatening Axis invasion of England. That now is unlikely.

The first time the bells rang was for the Allied invasion of Africa. Today they ring for it's the end. I imagine both times have helped to partially lift a pall of blackness from the heart of England. One victory of many yet to come. In not too long a time, England will have her eternal light. And with hers, we help to preserve our own. Just a little thing, but even the right to ring a bell is worth fighting for.

Sincerely,  
Carroll

## *ONE FOR THE CHRONICLE*

North Africa

Sweetheart,

This is going to be another race with the man who turns out the lights. We had our first French lesson tonight. One hour at a cost of ten francs (about 20¢). There are over thirty of us taking the course and I wonder how many will be in the class at the end of the month. The "Prof" is quite a character.

Here's one for the chronicle. Did you know that I sleep in the same pup tent with Caldwell? Well, any-

way, Caldwell is addicted to talking in his sleep. One time, talking in his sleep, he called out, "Sergeant of the Guard, Post Number 2," and had the sergeant and the corporal of the guard running around like crazy looking for whatever it was that was causing the "disturbance." Yes, he did. And never woke up during the entire time. Well, it so happens that I am in the habit of having the sergeant of the guard awaken me at six o'clock so that I can hold the reveille formation. He would generally poke his head in the end of the tent and shake my foot saying "six o'clock," and I would get up and get out.

I might add that at this time of the morning in Africa, it is dark, cold, miserable; and everything, including the tent, one's clothes, and one's disposition is considerably dew soaked. It is quite a character-building thing to rouse one's self from a nice warm (sometimes) bed and put on wet clothes in the dark, but I've become "soft" I guess, because I certainly do not relish the experience. This particular morning, it was colder and more dew soaked than ever when I heard the usual summons "six o'clock and all is well," and I, cursing and muttering to myself, worked myself into my stiff shoes, thrust my quivering knees into my almost rigid pants, meanwhile brushing my goose-fleshed back against the dripping, sloping sides of the pup tent, and finally forced myself to step out into the street.

As soon as I could get my eyes open, and just before I blew my whistle, I was struck with the premonition that all was not well. Strange, that at this hour no one was stirring. Not even the bugler. Hoisting my dollar

Ingersoll from my pocket and by the light of a glacial moon, I saw that it was 2:58 a.m. Hell hath no fury like a first sergeant robbed and otherwise deprived of his lawful and much needed sleep. Not only that, but I would have to repeat the whole getting-up process again at 6:00 a.m. Not good. I was just about to kill me a sergeant of the guard for doing this to me, when from within the depths of the pup tent, clearly and distinctly, came the voice of Sergeant Caldwell saying "six o'clock and all is well." It was then that everything went black. I couldn't reach all of him from the front of the tent, but what I did reach got bruised more than somewhat before he woke up saying, "What in Hell's a matter, are you crazy?" "Talk in your sleep, will you? Wake me up will you?" I tell him. "Just for that you can get up at six o'clock and take roll call." Boy, was I burned up.

So all he can do after I told him what happened is lie there and giggle the rest of the morning, so that I couldn't get any more sleep anyway. He thought it was funny. Well, it was, but I failed to see or appreciate the humor in it until after the sun had come up.

Gee, I'm afraid my little ball of yarn has run out for tonight. So good-night, love,

Dick

## GRAPHIC GREETINGS FROM NORTH AFRICA

*The Newtown Bee*, Newtown, Connecticut.  
The Editor,

                    This is  
            North Africa. This  
            is the land above which  
            stretches the blue Mediterranean and below  
            which yawns that shady part of the country  
            known as the Dark Continent. Down there Stan-  
            ley's safari found Dr. Livingstone, living still.  
Up here, Hope, Crosby and Paramount found Dorothy  
Lamour. This is North Africa — land of Bum-Bum, Swing,  
Gum and Vino — the home of autumned-colored, tatooed  
Sphinxes who reveal their sex mainly by snickering be-  
hind veils at the boldness of Johnny Doughboy — the home  
of rusty-skinned men who, franc-ly speaking, carry everything  
from a dozen "horanjuz" to an unwashed three-year-old beggar  
in their full-field pants. This is the land of mystery, in-  
trigue, adventure and kilometers; of roads on which wheeze char-  
coaled busses, sardined and roofed with enough humanity to elect  
a governor for Texas. This is where the weather is put  
together — and torn apart. Here are  
the pastures for countless sheep,  
goats, donkeys and discontented,  
unyielding cows who nibble for  
nourishment thru a soldier's  
palace of a pup-tent, de-  
positing traces of their  
nourishment. This is North  
Africa — sprawling and  
smelling — coated with sand  
and shieks — humped with  
mountains and camels —  
dry with crackling  
heat — wet with un-  
seasonal rains and  
squatting figures —  
empty without Dor-  
othy Lamour —  
or a reasonable  
facsimile.

E. G.

and all good wishes to you and all friends in Newtown and Southbury.

Ernest

## *SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WITH ARABS*

North Africa

Dear Mother and Dad,

Well, how are you folks making out? Have you closed the store, Dad, or did you change your mind? Everything is fine here.

Went in town the other day. The town is quite a place. It looks like a part of southern California except for the Arabs. Of course, all signs and advertisements are in French. They have trackless trolleys or buses that run by electric. Bicycles, or as they call them, "velos," is the best or rather main way of traveling. They have velo taxis similar to those at the N. Y. World's Fair. Horses and carriages are very common also. The Arabs ride or travel on their asses.

There are several sidewalk cafes and many restaurants. Beer and wine are sold. Food is rationed to the breaking point, but if you are lucky you will get a fairly decent meal; otherwise you'll probably dine on eggs or fish. I was lucky the other day and had pork chops, peas, carrots, bread, fresh tomatoes and the inevitable tangerine which culminates each meal. Wine is always served with the meal.

I went to the barbers and had myself a shave and haircut. The barbers here usually accommodate both men and women. They are called coiffeurs and are for dames and monsieurs. Had a tonic and the whole works cost 25 francs or about 50¢, which isn't bad at all.

Decided to go to the show and saw "Miss Catastrophe" with Joan Blondell and Melvyn Douglas. It was

spoken entirely in French. I didn't understand a word of it. Grace Moore in "One Night of Love" was playing in English, but I was tired by then of looking at the movies and I'd seen it years ago, so I left. Even here you have double features.

By the way, Martha Raye was here a few days ago. She looks about the same, except I think she's a trifle homelier than on the screen.

Well, Mom and Pop, guess that's all for now, so till next time be good and write soon.

Love,  
Harold

### *EVERYONE RIDES A BICYCLE*

Dear Boss,

Somewhere in England

It's been less than a year since I wrote you a couple of columns of adjective-studded drivel about my trip to California. Then I had only the shallowest conception of what the army had in store for me in the way of travel. But I'll say this much: I've never been bored with repetitious scenery. From Berkeley to Shenango to Military Secret to Military Secret.

And at this "Somewhere in England" five thousand miles from home, two Lamar "dog-faces" (enlisted men) accidentally bumped into each other, though neither knew the other was in England. The two Yanks Charley W—— and myself. Just to make it a bit more incredible, Charley and I are not only from the same town but we formerly lived across the street from each other.



It happened like this: I examined a register in the Red Cross rooms here which was made up by states. Charley's name was there, but since he had signed it several months ago, I assumed that he had been shipped out. I put my name and APO number on the register and a day or two later received a note from him. We met each other in town and held a "G.I. bull session" that lasted two and a half hours and ended only because I had to get back to camp by eleven o'clock. We were lucky because Charley was shipped out next day for some special duty, though he may return here soon. Maybe you think such a meeting doesn't give you a nice feeling!

A veteran of six months overseas, Charley has had a good deal of opportunity to observe and compare the English and the Americans. He sees an essential difference in our attitudes toward towns and cities. When you go to an English city they always point out to you their most ancient buildings and tell how old the place is. When you go to an American city they point out the newest buildings and tell you how modern they are, *a la C. of C.*

Everyone rides a bicycle. I've seen a colonel riding to his headquarters at a dignified pace; a shoddy individual with a half grown fox leashed to a basket; a workman with a scythe lashed to the bike frame; a mother and son riding together; a young couple on a tandem.

Incidentally, I borrowed a bike from the Red Cross the other day for the purpose of seeing some of the town and confidentially to show these Limeys how a

Yank can ride. I rode for two hours. Everybody passed me. I sweated, swore and huffed and puffed, but I was a 1918 Spad caught in a stream of Spitfires. Finally, when an elderly lady, ninety if she was a day, passed me and gave me a sweet, motherly smile, I gave up in disgust and took the bicycle back to the club.

I still can't help but think how much Lamar has changed in the past five months. I read of the changes, the deaths, and I find the pictures of my home town are so durable in my mind that I can't rebuild them to encompass the ever-changing developments. Like everything else, I suppose, I expect things to be in a state of suspended animation while I am gone and expect it to be exactly as it was before when I return.

Give my regards to all my friends there. Sincerely,

Wallie

## *I AM DRIVING A TRUCK NOW*

North Africa

Dear Toots,

As I told you in my other letter, I am driving a truck now. I really like it. Had a flat tire the other day and fixed it today and guess what was in it—a half horse-shoe. I bet you never heard of a tire getting a horse-shoe in it before. You know I think this old world's funny and I have just learned to enjoy it. After I got the flat fixed, I had a lot of other little jobs to do. I haven't had much spare time since I got the truck. But that gives me much less time to think.

Toots, I really wish you could see this country over

here. It's beautiful. The grapes are already forming on the vines. The farmers are putting up hay already. And in Iowa (Good old Iowa) the farmers are just planting their corn. The wheat is almost ready to thrash. You ought to see the poppies here. You drive along and you see a hill that looks red. You're wrong, it's poppies, and another hill will be yellow. I don't know what kind of flower it is, but they are still pretty. Well, I learned to ride a motorcycle yesterday. Boy, is that fun. You know what we do? We get some "Jerries' " cycles that they left behind them and take parts off one and put them on another. (We call them bastards because they got no pop.) I think I'll buy me one when I get home, that is if Kathleen will let me.

Love, Your brother,

Andy

## *A CITY OF CONTRASTS*

North Africa

Dear Mother,

Your last letter said that you had received no mail for two weeks. Hope that it's coming in more regularly now, since I have been writing at least every three or four days. Most of my mail has been sent airmail, but probably goes by boat.

Recently completed another one of my trips, and was in Bizerte, Mateur and Tunis. Rather desolate now up there, with many indications of the fighting that went on. But I did hit one beautiful town, historic Carthage. My history book tells me it was founded in

800 B.C., and had had a military history long before we took over. Spent the night in a small villa overlooking the Mediterranean. In the morning I dashed down the steep winding path and took a long swim out in the sea.

It really is a city of contrasts. There are many ancient ruins; in back of my villa there were old subterranean chambers, laboriously lined with carved stone. And in the city, very near the ruins, ultra modern apartments. Of course, the city has its native section, narrow, crooked stone-paved streets, bounded by high walls, filled with vendors, merchants, and swarms of dirty kids.

On one hill, in the center of the city, and overlooking all of the surrounding land, there is a large, graceful cathedral, its tall spires fortunately undamaged by the bombs or artillery.

One amusing incident, and my first real encounter with a French *jeune fille* (age about 9): we were parlez in what I thought was fairly good French. She grew bored and finally said, in darned good English, "I can't understand *your* French, why don't you speak English?" She had tired of humoring me. I still get a kick out of the kids; they're pests and beggars, all of them, but they're extremely friendly, unafraid, and interested in everything about us. Their common salutation, "O.K. Joe." It's a sad commentary on us that they have quickly, completely, and expertly picked up the proverbial troopers' vocabulary.

Love to you all,

Rog

## *IV—In Battle*



## *PEARL HARBOR CHRISTMAS*

Honolulu, December, 1941

Dear Folks,

This is the first chance I have had to write. I know you have been waiting to hear from me. I cannot say much when I do write.

I am OK, but am not allowed to write what has happened, and what we are doing—we are staying out in the woods. I have not seen Pete since we moved from the barracks, but have heard that he is all right. One of the football players I played with got shot down and killed about 100 yards from me the first air raid.

If it was not for the date we would not know about Christmas—there is nothing to remind me of Christmas that I knew back in Iowa. It doesn't look as if we are going to get to celebrate it in any way. I had 20 Christmas cards, and 20 stamps bought, and ready to send—they are in my foot locker. I guess I will have to wait till another Christmas to send them, because I cannot get at them. I had a present ordered for you folks, but as yet have not received it.

I am writing this in almost darkness, so will have to cut it short because I want to get it out in the morning. I hope every one is OK back there when you get this.

Mother, don't worry about me, because I am, and will be OK. Hello to Everybody.

Your loving Son

## *IN HELL UNDER NAZI RULE*

French Northwest Africa—Wow!

Dear Sue and Bernie,

Hello family of mine—long time no see—but under these circumstances you guys can easily understand why—censors prohibit me from writing about the places we've been in—or the action that's taken place. That will all have to wait till my return. And boy oh boy, will I be in my glory with the tall stories I'll be telling?

This letter is one of the few that we will have time to write, and will have to do for the whole gang back home so please pass it around. Believe me, I'll write every chance that I get. Remember that no news is good news from me. Anyway I've the feeling that the Lord is gonna pull a fast one on you and see that I get back so that you will have to put up with my ugly puss for a long, long time.

At this stage of the big game, I'm in the best of health and enjoying this heavenly African weather. Plenty of sun during the day, and nice and cool at night. Quite a change from the last place we were in, and I must say a pleasant and welcome change, even tho it's a dangerous one.

This French campaign will be old news by the time this letter reaches you. It seemed a shame to fight such



a gallant foe. They really gave a good account of themselves and put on a good show. But after it was all over we were welcomed with open arms wherever we went. Our paths were actually showered with fruit and flowers. These people were really living in hell under Nazi rule. Small wonder we're getting the ovation we are now receiving. After these years of war everything has been taken away from them. Little food to be found and no clothes at all. From the things I've seen I can thank the good Lord above that these bastards will never get the chance to set foot on our own land.

I know the first question you guys will ask will be about the first action I saw. Well, it was really funny. After our Infantry had taken a town and we had a breathing spell, three of us went scouting around to see what we could find. Well, we found a house next to a winery and killed a couple of quarts of delicious wine. We were about three sheets to the wind when we started back to camp and then all hell broke loose. A couple of airplanes swooped down and began to strafe the area. Slugs were hitting the ground all around us and, feeling the way we were, we didn't have sense enough to take cover. We stood right out in the open and emptied our guns at them. After it was all over and I realized how foolish we were, I must admit I had a funny feeling. The next time enemy planes came over I was the first to dive headlong into the nearest hole. I'm having more fun—never a dull moment!

Love,

Bernie

## *THERE IS NO LIMIT*

Australia

Dear Aunt Mollie and Uncle Jim,

I received your swell letter today and was very happy to hear from you. It's swell to hear from the folks back home. It's the best morale builder that I know of.

I can tell you that our boys are not soft. You would never be able to comprehend exactly what I am driving at unless you were out here and could see it with your own eyes. The Japs may get their courage from a fanatical love of their Emperor or their religion; the Germans may get theirs from the belief that they are the superior people and that nothing can happen to them.

It's a different case with us, the British, the Australians, and the other English-speaking people that I have come in contact with. With us, we know we have a job to do and we want to get it over as soon as we can. These boys are no supermen, no heroes. But they are just plain everyday folks.

They may be plenty scared when they go into action, but as soon as they go to work with their airplanes, their tanks, their artillery, or any other mechanical affair, they forget about everything except their machinery and what it is supposed to do. The result is they go out and do things that no man in his sane mind would do.

An example of this is what happened when the Marine fliers knocked off 14 transports that were trying to land on a very famous island in the Southwest Pacific. There were so many dead Japs in the water

that you could have walked from New York to Port Jefferson down the Long Island Sound without getting your feet wet. They were packed so tight on the deck that when the fighters went over strafing, the dead ones couldn't fall over.

The folks back home call it courage. To us out here, it's all in a day's work; and the sooner we can finish it, the sooner we can go home. There is something in this business that when a man is fighting for big stakes—his life and his ideals—there is no limit to what he can do.

Love,

Bob

### *A MESSERSCHMITT STARTED STRAFING*

Dear Folks,

Your letter was a soothing tonic for my nerves, a bit jumpy from enemy bombing, shelling and machine gun fire. Our artillery fire always sounds musical to my ears. When our planes bomb enemy lines, the uproar ensuing from such devastation is as deep and quieting for the mind as the base notes of a musical piece. During these three past months at the Front Lines in the North African campaign, I have experienced the horrors of war to a degree which I hope may never come again. . . .

One time in particular I enjoyed most here, and that was the brief time I spent as a liaison radio oper-

ator between the French troops and our company. My City College French proved quite an asset, and I got along famously with the French commissioned and non-com. officers. In fact, they flattered me with favors and kindness. I must admit I became a bit tipsy from their wines and liquors which I enjoyed immensely. The French here regard us Americans as their brothers-in-arms, and in my belief they overestimate us. I'm sure we won't let them down. They'll give their last bit of possession to an American, so great is their love for us. The Germans robbed them of practically everything, yet these Frenchmen possess the fortitude and guts to fight to the end, even with bare fists, if necessary. . . .

Ever since coming to the front lines, our officers have always impressed us with the necessity of digging slit trenches and fox holes as we went from one section of the front to another and bivouacked. Being always tired when arriving at a new bivouac, I seldom dug my trench more than a foot deep, and at times I even failed to dig one, yet one day it happened! It was early noon, and I was lackadaisically resting near my vehicle, when suddenly out of the sky a Messerschmitt came speeding down into our midst and started strafing. The pilot came low enough to snicker at me before ascending. Seeing his face taught me the lesson. To my thumb deep trench I went, and dug until it was at least five feet deep. This operation was enacted by practically everyone without an officer's command. Since that day, an officer has never had to do much ordering regarding trenches. . . .

That was my first encounter with the enemy. I despised his snicker and hope to have him and his kind buried deep down in these trenches.

With fond memories,

Louis

## *A THICK, STRONG BLADE*

*(Last winter, the Government appealed for hunting knives. This letter of acknowledgment was received by the donor of a knife from a Staff Sergeant.)*

Dear Mr. B—,

New Guinea

I don't know what type of person you are, but imagine that most folks back home who give a sheaf knife for the boys in the service (I know I prized the knife I had at home very highly and would be very reluctant to give it up) would like to be assured that it would be for a good cause.

I picked your knife because it had a thick, strong blade of a good grade of steel. A knife is a very useful tool to have if ever we are forced down in a jungle (God forbid) and we have plenty of jungle here. I've been in the tropics now for 2½ years and, although I should be used to it, we all get homesick once in a while and dream of seeing one of our New England "White Christmases." Every time I hear that song I get homesick.

Maybe the next one will find me home. I hope that we may all be home by then. So just keep faith in us a little longer and be assured that we really have a swell

country to fight for. I'll change that to the best country. I've seen three foreign countries and am firmly convinced that you can't beat the good old U. S. A.

I hope that you will send me a letter. Mail is the only physical connection we have with home and we make the most of it. My memories of home are bright and clear of how it used to be, but things are changed so much that I guess we'd all be strangers if we saw them now. So we like to keep up with what goes on.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain,

At your service,

Sol—

## *NOT A WORRY IN THE WORLD*

North Africa

Dear Libby,

Well, I've had my "Baptism of Fire," and I wasn't even scared until the day after, and then I nearly —.

I guess artillery fire is the worst there is. You hear the cannon go off, hear the shell whistle, and then hear it go off. And all this time you lay on your gut and hope it don't land near you. That few seconds interval feels like a lifetime, and gives you too much time to worry about it.

Everyone took it very well. At one time, as a piece of shrapnel came buzzing by, the guy near me said, "There goes a twin-motored one." Every time a dud landed, and there were quite a few, someone would yell, "Hooray for sabotage," or "Made in Poland." I guess nothing can down our sense of humor.

You know, if I didn't have to worry about the people back home worrying about me, I wouldn't have a worry in the world!

Benny

## *A WOUNDED BOMBARDIER*

Somewhere in New Guinea

Dear Gang,

Don't know how I can have any idea of how the night looks, had but a fleeting glance at it over my shoulder as I dashed from one "operating room" to the other. Fact is, have a very interesting, dramatic, heart-rending patient tonight. He came in shortly after 8 p.m.—a fine young 22 year old Wisconsin lad, bombardier on a Fortress, with a bad wound in his lower thigh, with a very bad chewing up of the femur, and, more important, markedly depressed, and in deep shock from loss of blood. Gee, how we worked on him! Gave him everything possible—plasma, transfusion, oxygen, warmth, stimulants, and then dressing with a cast.

And what happened then? He started to go downhill, so back to work, with feverish intensity, giving all we could, with all that medical science affords. Work hard, fast, sure—pull, push, struggle, and hope. And then, slowly, gradually, almost painfully, his condition started to improve, to ascend toward a reasonably normal status, just as if he were being born . . . and, in a way, he was.

And now, after the acute struggle, we must guard

against any sudden deterioration which he may not be able to survive. So, as I write these lines, I'm keeping the vigil, staying up within very close call (really 40 feet distant) so that should any contingency arise, no time will be lost in swinging into action to turn the tide *our* way again. . . .

It would be truly surprising if this letter doesn't seem disorganized and disjointed, for I have been continually up and down, taking care of our little aviator, and glory to tell, he is doing nicely—sleeping quietly, breathing easily, good color, good pulse and blood pressure, and apparently will live and see the wonder and the beauty of the world again—even tho he may never walk well. I hope for the day when all men will have peace for all time, and when no man will ever kill another man, nor cause him to walk with a deformed leg.

It is now after 4, and, guys, it really has been touching something to write this letter to you. Keep well, be of good heart, take care of my Darling as well as you can, and write soon. Perhaps symbolically, "Good morning, dear friends!" As always,

Teddy

### *IT ALL BECOMES REAL*

Dear Edna,

I spend as much free time as possible with the French—for several reasons. One is that I like them as I have mentioned, and find that they are not insular, especially those from the region of Paris. It has been my



good fortune to meet several who once lived in Paris or near there. One young chap, not so young either, but younger than I am, was captured at the time of the Fall of France, and for a long time was a prisoner of the Germans, and forced to work on the construction of airdromes around Paris. His right eyebrow is permanently parted as the result of a blow from one of the guards. His story of his escape from France, the three months of hiding with loyal French as he made his way to the Pyrenees, his recapture as he neared the port in Spain where he wanted to try to get passage to North Africa, his second escape and his final arrival here, sound unreal.

But, so did the reading of air raids—until I knew how it felt to be awakened by a bomb and hear the wail of the alert, the clatter of wooden soled shoes running through the dark to air raid shelters, to see the enemy planes trying to dodge the searchlights, to see and hear the “contravion,” or aircraft guns, the barrage lighting up the whole night, made brilliant when the flares dropped—and finally to know the feel of your clothes snapping against you in the pull of the bomb concussion and the ground tremble under your feet, and when daylight comes you are able to see the skull-like buildings where people have lived the day before. It all becomes real, then, and helps you believe the stories you hear. The boys in Wyoming have missed those things just as they have missed seeing great flocks of Flying Fortresses overhead, knowing where they are going, and waiting to count them again when they come back.

There are a lot of things to see in war-time Africa, but I'll never forget California and you all.

Bill

## *GENERAL IKE TO US*

North Africa

Dear Mother,

Six days since the fireworks started and we haven't done badly. I only hope and pray the rest of it until the finish will be about as quick. I told everyone some time ago to put their money on the Boss because he had plenty on the ball and now everyone knows what he's got.

We are going to get the Boss a phonograph because he is sick and tired of the radio with all its damn war news, rumors and what not. The dog is still in London and we hope to have him with us very shortly just as soon as we can get some decent living quarters for the Boss. He is still the same swell guy in spite of all the glorifying names and titles he is now known as. He is still General Ike to us who know and love him for what he has always been, a great soldier and a great guy. I hope and pray that the people on the home front get together and place aside, for the duration anyhow, any little differences and petty hatreds they have had for one another, and all push together for the General and in the long run it will be for themselves. If the folks back home only knew him like I do they would give up all pleasures and luxuries to help him win, which he will in the end.

I hope all at home are in good health and especially you, honey. I miss you very much, but that's one of the prices we have to pay. I'll close now and will write again in a few days. Be good now and say your prayers.

Love and kisses,

Micky

## *KILLED IN ACTION*

Somewhere in New Guinea

Dear Dad,

This Sergeant Wilson you asked about was one of my best friends. He was tail gunner on our crew. I forget exactly when he was killed, but I remember the details. We were bombing a convoy attempting to land troops. The Japs attacked us as we approached our targets. Right away I heard Wilson yell, "I got one of the . . ."

I dropped my bombs and then grabbed a gun. My gunner says that I got two Zeros, although, of course, it's hard to tell. I was surprised, as I hadn't shot the guns much before we came to combat. I aim by the way my tracers go. The Nips come in confidently, but when you put a couple of bursts near them, they zoom away—but fast.

As soon as we left the scene I crawled out of the nose and went back to see if everyone was O.K. They told me Wilson had been hit, so I went back to the tail. He was lying on his back swathed in his heavy flying clothes. He had been hit in the back by a shell fragment.

The co-pilot gave him a shot of morphine and I stayed with him the rest of the trip home. I fed him sulfa tablets and gave him water and cigarets. I didn't try to get at his wound because it was too cold and I was afraid that any movement might start a hemorrhage.

He was conscious and his eyes were open. I asked him if it hurt much and he said it did. It made me sick inside that I couldn't do any more for him. He died at the hospital.

I'll tell you what kind of a guy he was, though. He wanted to fly every day and got mad if you suggested he take it easy. He had a wife and was really in love with her. When he was carried off the plane he looked up and asked me, "Did we get the ship?" When I replied that we had, he said, "That's all I wanted to know." That was the last I ever saw of him.

If we have any heroes in this squadron, one is Sergeant Walter Wilson, not I. Tell his wife that she really can be proud of Wally.

Love,

Al

## *A PUNCH AT TOJO*

Somewhere in the Pacific

Dear Sam and Esther,

Just came back from a second operation to this, my permanent base, somewhere in the Pacific, my digestion ruined, my disposition unaltered, my wit unquenchable, my war corresponding zeal still flaming

but tempered. The tempering process is an involved one, emphasized by bullets, shells and bombs.

Trouble with the Japs is that they are neutral—that is, they don't care how they kill you. Of course, we out here feel the same way, and make the better effort to carry out our conviction. Result: lots of dead Japs. Bodies of dead Japs don't make a pleasant sight, but I assure you, a far more pleasant sight than others I have seen.

Sorry, didn't mean to be gruesome. I've been to the front twice and fired a few as well as ducked. I've undergone a number of hair-raising personal experiences for Old Glory and the story—and have come up with a sheaf of stories, some of which have actually been printed.

It feels good to be taking a punch at Tojo, even tho I haven't the slightest idea whether or not I've killed any of the little yellow men. Fired all sorts of weapons, highlighted by a mission as rear gunner over enemy territory in one of our dive bombers. Don't ask me how I did it. I dared myself, and then fooled myself by accepting the bid.

In decent health, considering the disease and lead poisoning we're subjected to. So keeping my fingers crossed. Lost 15 pounds on last jaunt from four weeks on iron rations, which makes me rusty, or ironic? Anyhow, after a week or so of good food and rest, I'll be ready to be off again.

My regards to the associated clans in New York.

Fraternally,

Stav

## TWO ARMY TERMS

Somewhere in Africa

Hello Miss,

I have some time which I can spend reading or writing. Two guesses which I am doing. No new mail. If there is anything in this letter that is deleted by the censor don't bat your brains out with curiosity. It is so much nothing.

There are two terms used in the Army I find forceful and descriptive. First—"Sweating it out." Whenever you have to wait, you "sweat it out." If you are in the pay line you are "sweating it out," make it "sweatin'." If you are being shelled, you hop into your hole and "sweat it out," etc. The second, if not descriptive, is forceful—"bitching." Any kick you have, when given to expression is "bitching." You "bitch" about this, you "bitch" about that, so you are "bitching" again. Bitching is a good thing; nice safety valve when you are fed up. Of course when overdone it is a pain. As a rule it's not done in chorus but individually. It usually brings a laugh or a razzberry. Any time a soldier stops bitching, there is something wrong and time to investigate. There is either something brewing or things are going too smooth. In the latter case something better be done as whoever heard of a satisfied Army getting anywhere.

My new apartment is a dream. One room of course. Built by my own itsy bitsy hands. My equipment is not quite as elaborate as the kind in your construction company. One pick and shovel. Like building any

house you start excavating. Enemy planes overhead. Time out. It's gone. After excavating, your house is built. Some call them fox holes; others, slit trenches; me, a hole in the ground. About four feet deep. Spread out your shelter half, put a blanket down, another blanket to put over you, raincoat and overcoat over that, a field bag for a pillow and your house is furnished. Not exactly watertight in case of rain but why worry until it does. Incidentally, it does plenty, accompanied by a bit of wind. When the rain stops the wind keeps up. Mommy nature is giving us the works. Aside from the weather, planes—enemy planes and friendly—keep you on the run and with meals uncertain, everything is wonderful.

I have had four different positions trying to write this. My last one lying down in my house. If we don't take Tunis soon, I am going to take it myself. If for no other reason than to take a bath.

Well, once again regards to everybody, hello to yourself, and so long until next time. With almost everything under control,

Chick

## *BETTING THEIR LIVES*

Egypt

Dear Dorothy,

I think the worst part of the whole show was the tenseness, the constant awareness that peaceful as things seemed to be, at any given moment a shell could land next to you without warning. It took me a

little time to get used to that, but like everything else in this bloody mess, it becomes a part of one's daily life. It wasn't until we got back away from it that I realized how tense I had been. The first night back I was miserable for a few hours and I knew it was the reaction which would soon pass—and so it did. I think the strongest impressions I have at the moment—the thing that is uppermost in my mind—is this: If the truly gallant fight these men out here are making—if the horrible suffering I've seen—the shattered bodies and decimated personalities—if the courage and devotion and bravery and determination—if these things are again to be for naught—if our leaders let us down again—if this isn't the war to end wars, then truly mankind has no right to survive. I've said again and again that I'm not here to help regain the America of Hoover, the England of Chamberlain, the France that was—and that feeling has become intensified to a degree that I can't put into words. Perhaps it's because of the kind of work we do and the sort of things we see and the position from which we see them—surely if there is any right as opposed to wrong, if there is any good as opposed to evil—this can and must be forever outlawed. If money and its concomitants—if the short-term gains are to take precedence in the peace that must come one day over the establishment of a civilization in which Roosevelt's four great freedoms can endure—then our leaders and all those who have supported them should be mercilessly wiped out.

These men are betting their lives that a world can be fashioned in which decency and self-respect are



paramount—in which something other than a large bank account is the measure of progress—and believe me they are going to get it, or they're going to be very difficult to deal with. I'm not suggesting that there has been anything to indicate that these things won't happen—that this peace won't at long last be given a real chance to operate—but I'm more conscious of my own determination to do what little I can to insure that the avariciousness that led us into this war and that left us so very badly prepared when it arrived shall never again have a chance to work its dirty way into the dictates of the world's people. That all sounds pompous and trite and presumptuous—I know that—but pompous and presumptuous as it may be, I feel and believe it with every fibre of my being—and in this I'm by no means alone out here.

Bill

## *WAIROPI PATROL*

Australia

Dear Sister,

This letter comes as a “request” from your last letter. You certainly seemed to mean business!

Yes, I was in New Guinea, very much so, but I didn't fly over. I took an airplane ride Christmas day, came out of my foxhole at the Front and flew about — miles back to — to the hospital. I weighed the sum total of 115 pounds and had acquired six months' beard, so I had the appearance of a dirty mop (not throwing any reflections on a mop, of course).

I was a member of the "Wairopi Patrol" and was one of the first ten Americans to enter Wairopi. There was where I first realized what a mess a bunch of Japs could create. The "Wairopi Patrol" consisted of men who had hoofed it over the supposedly impregnable Owen Stanley Range. A distance of one hundred fifty miles as the crow flies—of course a crow goes in a straight line and we went up and down! Our biggest "hill" was almost ten thousand feet high and was so muddy and the trail so narrow that we often had to crawl! Foot by foot, hand over hand. Of course we were carrying our rations (Am I kiddin') which consisted of canned corn beef and moldy rice—it can be compared with a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving. Baked green bananas were acceptable and a green pumpkin burned to a crisp was a delicacy. One week we lived entirely on roots and sugar cane.

Also in our pack were shelter half (tent), bayonet, canteen, canteen cup, ammunition-belt, ammunition, and of course our best friend, the rifle. It rained incessantly and by the bucketfuls. We were wringing wet most of the time either from sweat or the rain. Blankets, which were rain-soaked, were so heavy that they were discarded on the outset of the journey. Would stop at night, build up a fire if possible (and there were many times when no dry wood was available), dry our clothes or at least get the water in them warm, and cook a bite to eat. We would sing, smoke, and talk about home, girl friends of course, chicken dinners and ice cream. Nine weeks of this found us over the mountains and on our way to Buna. In the meantime,

however, our patrol had engaged in a tussle with the Japs outside of Wairopi and had drawn the first enemy blood of the campaign; that is as far as our division was concerned. Of course, the Australians had been fighting for several weeks over the Kokeeda Trail. The Jap patrol was annihilated, but we suffered no casualties, it was a perfect ambush!

While we were wearing blisters on our feet other companies were being flown over the mountains and were setting up positions awaiting orders for the "Big Drive." On December 1st, we joined with another company (air borne) and started a push that enabled us to reach our objective, which was to cut off enemy supplies coming from Sanananda to troops in the rear. Here we formed a perimeter around a section of the road, not far from Buna, thereby stopping all traffic to the rear. Here we were surrounded by Japs. We fought off counter attacks time and again and spent a hectic 23 days keeping the Japs in their places. Our outfit was given up for wiped out and rations and supplies were often driven back. We "*slept*" in mud and water and one time we had to get clear out of our fox holes as water was running out over the top. Flies, mosquitoes, leeches, and the terrible odor of "rotting Japs" all went to make up a most "undesirable atmosphere." Not to mention our own boys being killed. God bless every one of them, they were all swell fellows and we miss 'em like the devil. Those little — of Tojo's are really going to pay one of these days and pay till they scream for mercy!

Well, I guess I've said about enough unpleasant

things for a while, but you asked for it. There is a lot I have omitted and maybe I shouldn't have written what I did, but I know you really wanted to know. Maybe you can read between the lines and find the answers to most of your questions. Hope so.

Here are a couple of pictures, both taken *after*. Maybe you will enjoy them. The background is cut off for reasons, you know why! Am looking forward to some pictures of the family.

Love to all,

Billy

## *THE SCREAM OF THE BOMB*

The Middle East

Dear Family,

Well, I have finally tasted blood, so to speak, if you care to speak of such subjects. So far I have had no ill effects from the horrible sights—keep your fingers crossed—and am in a constant state of excitement (with a touch of dysentery, best cure some clorsite, as good as grandma's blackberry cordial!!).

I wish you could have seen me the other night. Up to then I was sleeping in my ambulance. When Jerry paid one of his nightly visits and dropped a few visiting cards (bombs to you), I had made my slit trench only to find ants, so came out of it as fast as I went in, deciding I preferred bombs to ants on my bare flesh. So got back to bed tucking myself in too well, for no sooner had I gotten settled than Jerry was back—these fellows never know when to leave well enough alone.

The scream of the bomb gives you warning and quite often time to get under cover. I heard the scream of the bomb and started moving. It must have looked funny as I couldn't get the blankets off and it was like a bag race. I got down the steps and under the car (no ants), leaving a trail of blankets behind me.

The scream of the bomb grew louder and louder, comparable to violins at a high pitch; then as if the whole orchestra, accent on the drums and cymbals, broke in with a chord, bang it had hit ( . . . line censored . . . ) like a roll from the kettledrums the ground shook, a break, sudden stillness, then the plucking of violas and harp, bits of earth, sand and metal landed about and above me (I am still under my ambulance) with the drums in the background as he—Jerry—dropped the rest of his load in a near vicinity. All that was left was drifting flares that made me think of a flute playing in the silence.

A shout from the medical officer brought me back to more worldly things and we were off doing our duty regardless of any more visiting cards.

Colly

### *COLD AND WET AND LOUSY*

Dear Jim, Somewhere in North Africa

We did receive mail from home and it was pretty funny to read that, on not hearing from me in so long, they had an idea that I was somewhere in the middle of the African campaign. Middle! Boy—that was no understatement. In fact—I had to read most of the let-

ters in foxholes. Jim, before I go any further, you, as an instructor, probably have to instruct recruits on how to dig a slit trench and foxholes. Well, you don't have to harp on that so much. Take it from me. When shells start landing around them they will know just what to do. They won't dig them by the book either. If they happen to be without tools they will dig with their hands and feet. I mean that I never thought I would like living in holes, but I learned to like it here. More than once, I was glad to have good old mother earth on both sides of me. Yes, Jim, I did say: "Sorry, buddies, but you don't mind if I squeeze in here with you fellows" to the ants, spiders and the numerous other insects that inhabit the underground. If you have any trouble with some of the fellows about digging foxholes just show them this letter. A foxhole saved many a life out here and you can take it from me that a fellow doesn't have to be told to dig one either.

We put in some miserable weeks here. We went through every phase of warfare that man has devised to date, and have come through with flying colors. We were attacked by planes of all types (boy, when those Stukas dive at you it makes you scratch and dig at the earth).

Besides the planes, we were right in the middle of tank battles, artillery fire and what have you. We have been cold and wet and lousy. We tramped around in mud up to our ankles and have slept on hard ground (still do, for that matter), and yet, Jim, our morale is high. Maybe this war is getting me a bit savage, but I can't help but let out a yelp of glee every time we ram

a shell into the breech and let fly at the enemy. It's a satisfaction to know that every miserable hour we have been through has been twice as miserable for the enemy. Jimmy, I know now for a fact what I thought once. That is, for all the cursing and griping of American soldiers, they are one hell of a tough bunch when the chips are down. I'm not flag-waving, either. I hate this war and everyone who started it, but I'm proud as all get out, too, of being amongst the first Americans to meet the Germans in the present conflict.

I knew in my heart from the beginning that we weren't going to a picnic and it's not, by God; we are at last on the right road and can't help but feel that it won't be long now. If I'm lucky enough to come back from this war (boy, the angels certainly have been on my side to date), I hope never to hear of the war and army again. Right now—well, I'm to be with a fighting outfit and will do my best in whatever I'm told to do. What more can I do?

Love,

Joe

### *LAST LETTER*

Dear Pa and Adele,

This is my last letter to you. I am keeping it in my pocket, and if I should be killed, I hope somebody will mail it to you.

I used to say that I wanted to do something to help make the world better.

Now I have the chance. If I die, at least I will know that I died to make the world a better place to live in.

I'll die, not as a hero, but as an ordinary young man who did all he could to help overcome the forces of evil.

I'm only worried about how sad you would be if I get killed. But I hope you will also be proud that your son gave his life for the greatest cause in the world—that men might be free.

Your devoted son,  
Sidney

### *DOUBLE OR NOTHING*

Dear Mom,

North Africa

We are not grim, silent young men as the movies would have it. To the contrary, we always rehash our raids when all is done. We talk of someone who is missing just as one does about some good friend who has moved out of the neighborhood. As long as we can talk everything is fine. It's when you are alone that it sometimes sneaks up on you.

How do we feel when we go out on a raid? The worst part is "sweating them out." That is, the time up until you enter the briefing room where last minute advice is given, code calls for fighters and bombers, etc.

Up until that last minute you are tight as a bow. Coffee is the only thing that tastes good. You smoke cigarette after cigarette just to be doing something. You wonder what the target is, how bad the flak will be, or how many fighters Jerry is going to throw at you.

Millions of thoughts pass through your mind. And always swimming around is the little doubt devil, "Am I coming back?" Always your ego is there to say, "Of



course I'm coming back." And yet outwardly you are as unconcerned as a co-ed on her way to a ball game.

In the briefing room all this fades away as faces are intently turned toward the intelligence officers, the weather man, and your C.O. Everyone focuses on the problems at hand and bodies gradually relax as the brain stops whirling and at last there is something to do.

Then away you go, piling into trucks, cracking jokes, having a last cigarette, and then the plane is reached. Bombs O.K.; ammunition O.K., etc. The starter whines, the motors cough their way to life. Your mechanic gives you a cheery thumbs-up and you're out to your take-off position.

There, engines are given a final check, the field comes to life with the roar of living engines and the dust swirls out behind and curls lazily into the air. Your eyes are glued to the instruments watching for the smallest indication of trouble. She must be perfect. This is it. This is the big double or nothing throw.

Then you are on your way to the target. Everything has vanished—all the worries and doubts are gone and there's nothing but the clean air, the beauty of formation and the joy of flying.

All around is your fighter protection, darting here and there like a sheep dog watching his flock. Over the radio you can hear them chattering back and forth to each other—a very comforting sound.

Your target soon appears, announced by little puffs of smoke in the sky. You look at them with a sort of abstract interest—as if you were seeing a movie. Here

the weaving begins to throw the ack ack off. You wonder apathetically if it did any damage, for that's flak.

Then your run is over. Your bombs are overboard and you're beating it back like hell for home and anxiously waiting for some telltale sign of damage. Stations are checked over the interphone to determine whether or not any of your crew is hit.

Now you're out of the flak and the enemy's fighters are upon you and your escorts are having a hot time. Over the interphone you can hear your gunners as they call out targets. Outside you see a plane diving down, leaving a plume of smoke behind.

All of a sudden the guns are quiet. The planes are gone and a great relief sweeps over you as your field is sighted. All this time you've been too busy to think or to be afraid. As your wheels touch and you park your plane you're conscious of a heavy tiredness and a sharp hunger and an elation that's too sweet to describe.

And that's how it goes, Mom. I might say that I have had very good luck so far and have high hopes of continuing in that category. Working like hell and taking advantage of every safety factor give you a pretty fair chance. The rest of the job lies in the lap of Old Dame Fortune.

There's been a few anxious moments, as is bound to happen, but we've always got home with not more than a few flak holes. I hope this does away with some of the imaginations I know you've been building in your mind. If not, I've failed.

Your loving son,  
Ralph

## WHEN TUNIS FELL

Dear Bob,

North Africa

The last show at Tunis was a honey—plenty of fireworks and a real clean-up a la Americaine. The 8th army did its part but our boys and especially the air forces sure gave them plenty of hell and hastened the last round up here in Africa.

Here's what happened at the last battle of Tunis and Cape Bon. Talk about your Sergeant York. I and my sergeant were jeeping along the road shortly after our entry into the city of Tunis. "Jerries" and "Ities" were surrendering by the thousands. Most of them had been rounded up but many were still in the hills and mountains in that locality. Four Italian officers and eleven enlisted men came out of the brush, hands raised wanting to surrender and be brought back. I asked the sergeant to take charge and he said, "Hell, Captain, why waste time with them? Let them walk back—we've got thousands more coming, let's get going."

Proceeding further down along the road, we turned them over to the English. Lorries loaded with German and Italian prisoners driving their own cars back to the rear prisoners' camps was the most gratifying sight our eyes ever beheld in this damn desert. Decaying enemy bodies stank but even that didn't spoil our happiness.

We went on to Tunis, Bizerte, Cape Bon and covered the whole area and an eight-day civilian celebration was given our boys in Tunis. Wine flowed freely.

We were warmly received in Tripoli. In spite of the heat and all, I feel great, and we certainly had a good time for a few days.

Where to next? Your guess is as good as mine—I have my own ideas. Would like to spend the autumn in Rome—if so—will send you all blessings from the Pope.

As ever,

Phil

### *A JAP ATTACK?*

Dear Folks,

Southwest Pacific

It's supposed to be winter down here but it's as hot as an August afternoon at 3:00 p.m. back home. Well, it's finally dusk again. In a few minutes it will be dark and they will be over again. You know we don't have any twilight in this part of the world. I wonder how thick they will be tonight. They were sure plenty bothersome last nite and the nites before. I can hear the whine of one now in the distance. I wonder where he is going to attack.

Here he comes—smack—you reach out to bring him down but he does a beautiful maneuver and gets away. You cuss and vow that the next one will not escape. Then you hear more of them coming in. The flashlights reach into the dark trying to locate them. Finally you get a few and you feel more satisfied. After a few more hours of this you fall to sleep from sheer exhaustion. A Jap attack? Hell no, it's these darn vicious mosquitoes that get under our nets at nite.

Love,

Ernie

## *THIS MAN'S ARMY*

Dear Dad,

Casablanca

Being in the Army now is our personal contact with the richest experience of the Twentieth century, the experience which, one way or another, will change us forever. We will never be the same again.

The Army is the United States of America. All the glory, humor and magnificence of America are ours when we look and listen to what is all around us.

In the Army we eat, drink, shave, work, laugh, march, study, read, take a shower, listen to the radio and swap talk of home and "the girl I left behind" with men from the biggest cities and the smallest towns, from the factories and the farms, from the mountains and the seashore, from the sweltering bayous of Louisiana and the dripping coast of Maine. We begin to see the bigness and the brawn of our native land.

We hear of the roads of Oklahoma and the hills of Kentucky from the guys in the double-decker bunk, two down from ours. We listen to the dreams of California and the laughter of New York.

We hear the rambling-voiced Texan talk about women and cattle from his Lone Star State; let the barber from Tallahassee, Florida, tell us about big oranges and the sunny skies; listen to the ex-song-and-dance man full of wearying, wonderful words about the old two-a-day routines at B. F. Keith's.

The barrack is full of men who are the heart of America and the hope of the world: the little guys who

really live, who envy no one and accept everyone, friends from the start. They are part of a common people fighting a common enemy for a common cause all over the world.

The Army is sharpies from Chicago and fast talkers from Brooklyn. It's accents from Florida and haircuts from Harvard, quiet guys who like to read and kids full of pep who go dancing.

It's taxi drivers and telegraph operators, cops and shoemakers, writers and waiters, bartenders and bus-boys. It's guys who used to be plumbers, riveters, ship-fitters, musicians, carpenters, salesmen, painters, printers, street cleaners, teachers and butchers. The men who used to work in America. They used to be all things and now they are one thing, they are fighters.

The men of this Army are "America, the beautiful; America, the free" in person and not in a moving picture, shining democracy in khaki trousers and high brown shoes. They are Joes and Harrys, Petes and Daves, Johnnies, Als, Barneys and Bills! Irishmen, Swedes, Poles and Greeks. Jews, Italians, French, Canucks and Chinamen, a melting-pot symphony of human liberty and equality.

It's men who remember the corner drug store and a movie on Saturday night, a couple of beers with the boys and listening to Fred Allen. It's guys who can't forget the gay white way—Broadway of America. No matter what they call it nor what city it's in, everyone has a Main Street on Saturday night to remember.

It is life of the men who have been around and the innocence of green kids from the sleepy towns of In-

diana and North Dakota. It is a long-distance phone call on Sunday night to the girl you love and hearing the sadness beneath her voice, being angry at not being able to do anything about it.

It is a box of chocolates and a cake from Mother and the impulsive generosity with which it is passed around the barrack. It is the week-old copy of the home town paper with the news of the soldier from Toledo, O., who married a girl you used to know.

The Army is doing a hundred things you never did before and being a hundred things you never were before. It is sweeping the barrack in the morning and peeling potatoes in the mess hall; it's beefing about G.I. food and eating every bit of it; it's seconds on the pie at noon-time chow and listening to the juke box for an hour at the PX, hearing Tony Pastor's orchestra play "Massachusetts" four times.

It's getting some paper and envelopes from the Service Club and saying: "Dear Mom and Dad"; it's walking your post in a military manner and doing a lot of heavy thinking between 2 and 4 a.m.

It's doing your own sewing and keeping your brass buttons gleaming; washing a pair of socks; shining your shoes for inspection and making your bed without any wrinkles.

This is our Army and although it is no musical comedy it still has the greatest humor and gayety of any Army in the world.

This man's Army is patience, toughness, humility and freedom; it's nothing that spells defeat and everything that spells victory.

This man's Army is your boy or the kid on the corner who isn't around much any more. This man's Army is sons and fathers, husbands and brothers, the best guys in America and the best Army in the World!

Your loving,

Son

## *POST WAR WORLD*

North Africa

Dear Bob,

Well, now I am back home for a day or two. I came in for a hop over the desert yesterday. We had a routine trip. Just a lot of sand and hot bumpy air. Being back here gives me a chance to catch up on letters. My letters may have a hard time getting through because I mail them from so many different places.

I suppose you have had a chance to watch spring come on and to see the park freshen up as it always does.

Over here every now and then, I do some singing. The other evening I was in an Officers' club in a large northern city. We were sitting there sampling some of the ever-present local wine when a captain walked in and sat down at the piano. He sat there by himself and played any tune he thought about, mostly Victor Herbert and other popular melodies. We listened quite a while. Then a couple of captains I was with said, "How about a song, Fletcher?" So I sang some of the old well-known tunes. Soon others joined the group and we all joined in. And so time slipped by and we enjoyed each tune. For me college Glee Club days returned.



Beneath the full moon, the Rommel moon, raiders had struck our city. The song died and the local permanent crews quickly filed out to take their positions. The few of us on visiting crews went to safe shelters and listened and watched as the raiders were turned away—the song of war and destruction had for the present obliterated the songs of the past.

This morning, I read Willkie's book, "One World." Undoubtedly, you have heard a lot about it. I may be a little out of the perspective of the civilian reader now, so perhaps I can't judge as you do at home. But, nonetheless, I see in it an expression of many truths, which, like it or not, are more and more becoming parts of our daily life. The impact of Americanism on this One World is a weight far greater than anyone within our borders can ever realize. It hit Willkie pretty hard, man of the world that he is, when he made his journey.

This war is not just a defense against Hitler and Tojo. It is a catalyst for a world in the molten state. I have seen so much of that. Poor, ignorant, filthy, undernourished and underprivileged people, suddenly (during the past 25 years) have seen that man can be individually free; that each American can own an automobile, and that education is a privilege of the many, not the few. Over here America means so much. In many cities we have regular American type radio stations with swing music and all. Programs on the 15 minutes. Fed announcements, no delays, no propaganda, everything orderly. That's American. The natives eat it up. We have army papers. Those who can read English buy them.

New local troops have American equipment. But the biggest impact lies in our freedoms and our rights. After the war one billion people are going to expect freedoms they never dreamed of—say nothing about never shared.

And our freedom from disease—in disease-infested areas—has been a great awakening. All manner of taboos on medicine and hygiene are being uprooted, and in places like this it is rare that more than one in seven children ever passes 10 years old. Also our clothes, our money, our movies, everything are being taken up. The idea that the Arab likes filth, poverty, and old rags is utterly wrong. Give the women fine clothes and they will cast away veils and robes. And give an Arab a truck and you'll think he never had seen a camel. They drive for days across the desert no one else could.

So local governments are awakening. Colonial masters are finally working off their extra chins. Overnight new demands are being met and created. And that will bring us to the one world of the post war.

Your friend,  
Fletcher

### *“MISSING IN ACTION”*

Dear Dad,

In previous letters I wrote all that I could about the country with the exception of names of cities and such.

We didn't stay in Chanzy as long as we expected. On

February 1, we left to put into practice against the enemy that for which we were trained.

Our first position against the enemy was at Faid Pass. You must have read of this battle in the papers back home. It was after this battle that you received telegrams from the war department that I was missing in action. In this battle I got separated from my outfit. In trying to locate it I was adopted by an infantry outfit to help in the defenses of the unit. Boy, I was lost in that unit, an artillery man in the infantry. After two days with the infantry, a buddy from my own battery and myself set out to find our outfit. After five more days of walking numberless miles over mountains and flatlands, drinking rainwater from mountain ledges and eating only what a few kindly Arabs could give us, we finally caught up with our outfit.

During this experience I prayed hard to God. You and Kate must have been praying also because we reached our outfit none the worse for wear. I mentioned in a previous letter that the packet containing your Rosary beads arrived safely and is my most precious possession.

Well, these are the highlights and experiences of our travels up to date.

Your loving son,

Jim

### *FRONT LINE CHAPLAIN*

Dear Reverend R—,

Southwest Pacific

Received your letter and book. I carry the book with me wherever I go. There is much that I would like to

talk to you about, but that will have to wait until, if and when I see you again. So many have been killed and wounded that one can be thankful from day to day for existence.

The courage, bravery and faith of American soldiers is something I hope I can tell people about some day, that and the fact that it is just as noble and glorious to fight and work for a better and peaceful world during peacetime as it is to fight for peace during wartime.

We have had no chaplain in the front lines. One Protestant chaplain, we think, was killed and the other was physically unable to stand this hard life. The Catholic chaplain remaining has all he can do at the first aid station and forward hospital. An Australian Protestant chaplain is always found in the front line just preceding an attack. It makes one proud of his faith when its leaders set such an example of devotion.

In this war there is nothing noble. Our wounded have been shot and killed by snipers while being carried to the rear on stretchers. The enemy takes no prisoners, even wounded men that fall into his hands are killed, small wonder that our men fight back ruthlessly. As this is the jungle, the dead must be buried as soon as possible. Somehow I have managed to say a short prayer at each burial that took place near me. Sometimes even that was interrupted by flareup of shooting.

Soldiers are fighting and making great sacrifices for peace. When peace comes it will be the people led by their churches who maintain it. Fighting and working to make a better world and maintain peace is to my

mind far more noble and glorious than this. However, it is more thankless, less spectacular and less appreciated. I would like to have my sons know that; I hope that somebody tells them if I don't. Indifference on the part of good people will only let another war come to pass. Fighting men in time of peace will save peace as long as they fight for honest principles. I hope my sons will never have to fight for a better world with a gun. I hope that for all young people.

Your friend,

Alfred

### *REINFORCEMENTS—BUT NOT RELIEF*

Egypt

Dear Doris,

My chief impression since I've gotten out into the middle of this show has been one of amazement at the appalling magnitude of the job at hand. This is, comparatively speaking, a fairly small army and yet the vastness of it, the complexity of its supply machinery and the scale of its operations goes far and beyond anything I had ever dreamed. Equally trenchant is the determination to win—the certainty that we will win—and the unstinted courage of the entire army—or that part of it which I've seen. I've talked to my patients, and the stories they tell—and the manner of the telling—all bespeaks the heroism of the little publicized but much depended upon British Tommy and his unflinching ability as a soldier. The seriously wounded

are pathetic at times in their anxiety as to whether their wounds will permit them to return to their unit. Rarely if ever have I heard a Britisher say anything which indicated that he was even thinking of losing. They complain of the desert—as well they may—and yet they don't seem to want relief. Reinforcements—yes—any army wants that—but not relief.

Let no one ever say, to me at least, that “America won this war.” If anyone does, they're going to have an awful debate on their hands. What Russia is doing, you know as well as I, but these men out here are doing their share and more.

I carried some prisoners the other day—among them a Nazi pilot. I asked him if he was fighting for Germany or the Nazis. It was a dumb question and deserved the arrogant reply that I got when he said in a thick guttural accent, “I am not vun of dose who can make de destinction.” I asked him whether he could approve of the things which the Nazis had done—such as the persecution of the Jews. His reply was that he didn't like that, “but dey are so unimportant.” We didn't get along too well anyway and he was too badly shot up to fight with so I dropped the conversation at that. I was impressed to see that he, as well as the other three prisoners whom I was carrying, were accorded the exact same treatment as the Tommies received. I've also carried patients who had been taken prisoner by the Germans and then recaptured and freed by our troops; I was pleased to hear that Jerry treated them very well, in fact, as well as his own wounded. The stories one hears I believe of course, but they don't

seem to apply to the military when in contact with the enemy.

Bill

### *ALL A MARINE NEEDS*

Darling,

I'm sure that there are hundreds of more fellows here that are writing letters just like this one. (We've been given special permission to write tonite.) Practically every one in the hangar is lying on his bunk writing. Except for messengers running around with last minute instructions and the Guadalcanal veterans giving last minute advice, every one is writing. I wonder just how many of them will be here with me on the return trip? They're all gay now—adventure is appealing—but will they be as gay or as carefree in a month or so? I only wish that every one of them was as confident and sure as I am. I don't want this to sound morbid—but just give you an idea of the local scene.

Since I've heard the many tales from these boys back from Guadalcanal it's even more a thrill than ever to be a Marine. It seems that no one ever speaks of personal exploits—only Corps victories. It must be a grand feeling for them to know that it was they who have given us the foothold and spirit to carry on their job—one that is big and their past glories will have to be our goal. If pride in the Corps or belief in the cause is any forecast of future events—well, we'll do our job—and well, too. We have many advantages that these fellows hadn't. We have the invaluable advice they have given us—we have better and newer equip-

ment. With the breaks with us we should accomplish much more than even they did.

You mustn't worry about me at all. I have so much to come back to. Dry powder, a good sight and a target is all any Marine needs—and I have so much more.

David

## *WE LAND IN SICILY*

Somewhere in Sicily

Dear Folks,

Today, for the first time in this new location, your mail came through to me and I don't think any mail ever brought more joy than did those seven letters from home.

The past couple of weeks have been the most difficult I've ever had to experience, but I'll put your mind at ease before continuing on with this letter by telling you that I am perfectly well and quite safe now. The ordeal of the invasion was for us more of a test of nervous endurance than physical stamina. This type of war (e.g. amphibious operations) is I think the quintessence of all the most terrible aspects of war. The cumulative effect of the many dangers involved build up a tension within the bravest soldier that lies like a stone upon your heart.

I don't know whether the newspaper accounts made mention of the fact or not, but I know that one of the incidents that every man will forever carry in his memory is of a great storm that rose while the invasion fleet was creeping toward the island. To add to all the other



dangers the sea unaccountably and seemingly for no reason (the barometer did not drop) began to kick up with the roughest surf we'd ever experienced and the boats tossed like corks until nearly all were sick. There was no turning back. The die was cast and visions of disaster flitted through all our minds. Those assault boats and invasion craft could never get through surf and onto the beach without enormous loss. I think nearly every soldier in that great armada lifted up an unabashed prayer to still the waters. There was no panic and no tears but a depression seemed to settle over the seasick men, and all there was left was to hope for an answer to that desperate prayer. I know that I thought of that miracle of the Sea of Galilee, and I, who have been a skeptic about the miraculous, prayed for such a one again. Suddenly about an hour and a half before the zero hour, the sea calmed so suddenly that the sailors said it was certainly a freak of nature—or something else as unexplainable.

Several days after landing we heard a news broadcast saying there had been little opposition, but that must have been news to the combat teams in our sector who had to battle savagely from the water's edge.

I have always been impatient with patriotic platitudes, but as we stood by out there in the darkness and saw those assault troops drive into those pitch black beaches, tired and sick, but with an unbelievable amount of guts, I thought the people back home must be forever in their debt. Those lads had to go out of those boats into the water, then on to the darkened beach, fairly sown with mines and barbed wire. Back

of them were machine guns, and artillery zeroed in on the beach and poured it into them. I wonder if any army ever faced a tougher job. When they closed with the enemy it was they who gave way and there were Germans up there, too. German wounded came into our aid station from the Hermann Goering Division, and the second and tenth panzer's crack troops.

We had some harrowing experiences, too, during those early hours. Our number nearly came up twice when dive bombers splattered our invasion craft with mud, water, and shrapnel as we drove in for the beach. We scurried over the dunes and burrowed into the sand. There were uncountable incidents and those we will remember are those that affected us personally. I remember persuading a friend to seek a more secure shelter further inland off the dunes and when we had moved to the new spot watching and hearing the 88 shells sing overhead and into the very dune where he would have dug in. The dive bombers are truly terrifying. They really jangled our nerves and we were overjoyed to see one caught in our ack-ack fire bursting into flames almost overhead.

Our navy did a marvelous job. They were our artillery and during the crucial hours smashed up a formation of German tanks that had almost driven our men back into the water.

Well, that's enough of that. Everything is going our way now and the crisis is past. Good night and God bless you. I thought of you many times during those dark hours and found comfort in the thoughts.

James

# *V—Days Remembered*



## *AN EASTER TO REMEMBER*

North Africa

Dear Folks,

I had Easter Sunday afternoon all slated for letter writing, but that could not be. Maybe I had better go back and describe Easter in Africa from the beginning. I doubt if I shall soon forget it. Sometimes little things have a value which lingers beyond the impact of larger things. The series of little things on this Easter was pleasant.

A group of us met near the flagpole to catch our truck-ride into town. It was surprising to see that four or five hundred men of all faiths joined us at the quaint French cathedral in town.

The local high mass was just finishing as we approached the church. The familiar strains of the choir singing "Agnus Dei" met us as we turned into the iron-fenced yard. Little Negro children in fresh-ironed clothes ran about the yard. Several local Negro soldiers stood in the crowded doorway. Overhead buzzards whirled on the rising thermals. The old pump organ groaned the accompaniment. The priest raised his voice, "Dominus Vobiscum," and the choir droned the "Et Cum Spiritu Tuo." Benches and sandals

scuffed as the throng knelt for the last blessing. A blue-clad sister elbowed through the over-heated crowd collecting the last few francs. The mass was over.

The Cathedral disgorged its people and a profusion of color milled about in the morning sun. The red fezzes on the Negro troopers; the starched whiteness of the yards and yards of cloth folded around the fat native women—the large gold earrings and waist-length brass chains; French women in carefully kept, once-fine clothes—now old and worn since the last cargo arrived from Paris; and the local priest in white, his long beard and stout cross lying on his chest.

But we were not the only watchers. For all our interest, the local people were far more astounded than we were. There we were, officers and men, 500 strong, gathered at their church to celebrate the same mass they celebrated. The psychological impact was great. Smiles broadened, and many a warm hand was outstretched with its inevitable “*Bonjour, mon ami.*” To these people, the handshake is a solemn and definite mark of comradeship. Not all victories are consummated under clouds of gunfire. The things our might had not achieved our devotion to the Eternal God now opened to us.

The mass was one I shall never see duplicated. Our chaplain flanked by Negro altar-boys intoned the rich Roman cantos. In the large choir-loft, the native choir raised eager voices in fervent Hallelujahs.

The old dusty church had seen many an Easter; but this time the walls bulged with a fine cross-section of the melting pot that is America. On my right was a

Protestant lieutenant and in front of me were several more men attending a new service in honor of the rebirth of the Savior of all men.

As we filed out, the inadequate basket was burdened with unaccustomed affluence—the brand of America—the ready dollar. Many an Easter will pass before that town and those communicants forget that spiritual invasion.

All my love,  
Patrick

### *DO NOT OPEN UNTIL XMAS*

Alaska

Dear Mother and Dad,

No one up this way had to do much Dreaming of a White Christmas this past holiday season. This post had a most pleasant Christmas and New Years. We decorated the folding, artificial tree you sent, and placed it on the shelf in the rear of our hut. It looked nice, and gave the place that real Christmas atmosphere. I kept all the packages marked “do not open until Xmas,” and then looked at all my gifts Christmas eve.

A very nice candle-light service was held at midnight in the recreation hall. Ken and I both attended, and afterward opened our presents. That cigar box of tricks and novelties was a brain-storm, and certainly played havoc around here. The fellows sort of wondered if everything was O.K. with my Dad, and I as-

sured them that he was perfectly normal. In just two days, I had lost all my trusting friends. I think the trick silverware was the funniest of all, especially the knife. The voice-tester caused me a sore jaw for a couple of days. I handed it to one of the Corporals, and he pressed the button unusually hard with one hand, and *wow!* what a reaction. He immediately socked me square in the jaw with the other hand. Everyone just about had a convulsion, including me, but it did hurt a little to laugh. I guess that's the price a practical joker must pay. We pulled the buzzing match box trick on the officer's orderly. He was coming down the mess hall aisle with an armload of dishes, when we stopped him and asked him to take the matches to the mess sergeant in the kitchen. He picked up the box, and let out a yell, and pretty near scattered dishes all over the mess hall to the unholy delight of all the soldiers nearby. You couldn't have sent a better gift, Dad, to a bunch of men way out in the wilderness the way we are. We have partially consumed the package of food containing Nescafe, ripe olives, Nestle's cocoa and packaged soup. That was some assortment in that package. All of us enjoyed the package of plum pudding. We put the can on the stove as quick as we could get the paper off. Several days after Christmas your other package arrived of the coffee can containing the candy and another can of Nescafe. Oh yes, thanks, Mother, for the can of Sherry Pralines. Boy, I really had a Christmas deluxe.

I hope you are all starting the New Year in the best of health, and that this letter finds you happy. Give



my love to Grace and Grandpa and pat Robin a time  
or two for me.

Your loving son,

Buck

*FOR YOU AND YOU ONLY*

Camp Swift, Texas

Dear Mom,

A week from today is Mother's Day, and the little enclosed gift is for you and you only. I don't want any squawking, and if I find out that you didn't spend every cent of it on yourself, you can rest assured my mail will cease. That seems to be the only way I can penalize you now if you don't listen to me. Mom dear, if you write back and tell me all the things you bought and did with the money, you can't imagine how happy you'll make me. My only regret is that I'm afraid it won't nearly make up for that big kiss I used to give you on your day. Just close your eyes next Sunday morning (that's usually when I kissed you) and I'll lean across the country and give a big hug and kiss to the most wonderful mother in the whole wide world. Here's a little favor I have to ask of you. I've looked high and low for Mothers' Day cards, but in vain, so will you please call all the swell mothers I know, and wish them "A Happy Mother's Day"? (That goes triple for you.) I know they won't be happy for one reason, but promise them that I'll bring your and their sons back very soon feeling happier and healthier than ever.

Wow, Mom, do I feel swell!!! Every minute of the

day I'm on pins and needles. I *never* feel tired, and I'm always ready to do things and go places. I guess you can understand why it is so hard to feel anyway but the best down here. The food—perfect; climate—can't be beat; training—muscle building; entertainment facilities—very uplifting as far as morale goes. When I come back to you soon, you are going to say to me, "I'm glad, my son, that they took you in the Army, though I missed you a little, but you've come back a real man, healthy and strong (and you eat everything on the table—ha, ha!)" How about it, honey, aren't you going to say those exact words?

Your loving son,  
Bennie

## *A COMMAND PERFORMANCE*

Fort Monmouth, New Jersey

Dear Leonard,

Had the thrilling experience of doing a "Command Performance" for President Roosevelt with the Army plays at the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park last Saturday night.

While it was a memorable occasion, the edge was somewhat worn off by the fact that I had seen the President countless times in the Newsreels, and while I was talking to him, I couldn't escape the impression that this wasn't real, but that I was watching a news-reel shot, and that I was seeing it all through the eyes of a camera.

We arrived at about noon, and inasmuch as the plays

were scheduled for five in the Roosevelt library, we were lolling about the spacious, but vigilantly guarded Roosevelt lawn, making ourselves at home. I was playing Mumly-Peg with another soldier, when who should come riding a bicycle that was describing a slightly erratic course, but Eleanor Roosevelt. Singing out a cheery "Hy'a Fellas" as she rode by, she laughingly explained that she was a little wobbly because she had only just taken up the bicycle.

Honest, Leonard, it was like a scene out of Saroyan. It was just the delightful whimsy Saroyan revels in, except if you saw it on the stage, it would appear too fantastic. And, President Roosevelt was the most attentive, most appreciative, most ready to laugh (with a laughter that reverberated around the walls) audience I've ever played to. It was amazing to witness the spectacle of the most important person in the world, shouldering perhaps the greatest burden ever imposed on any man, completely relax himself and release himself completely to the enjoyment of our efforts. It was an experience I would not have foregone for a fortune.

Yours in Arms (not for too long, I hope),

Harold

### *EVEN THE KP'S WERE SMILING*

Dear Aunt Rosie,

I just finished chow, and let me tell you they did all they could for us guys—no squawks on this Thanksgiving Day. I ate like a pig. The menu: turkey, mashed potatoes, turnips, celery, salad, cake, cranberry sauce,

coffee, milk, nuts, and apples. Even the KP's were smiling, and not yelling at us to clean up the tables. When you get a KP to smile, you know everything is OK. I know, 'cause I was one two Sundays in a row! The only thing I'd like better is to be home with the family. But not till this war is over. I wouldn't want to be out until the armistice is signed for anything. I guess you have to be away from home on a day like this to really appreciate it and feel for the first time like a soldier.

I got your prayer beads, and thanks. They're really swell. Say, Rosie, if you get a chance, will you send me a map of the U. S.? I want to see just where I am here. Also, you'll never know how handy your little gift of two bucks came in. There it was, Saturday afternoon, and I was broke, but I mean completely. We couldn't make our usual end-of-the-month touch from the other guys, Ray and I, because everybody else was broke, too. Then came your card with the bills, and rescued us from our terrible fate, and you thusly became the angel of three privates. You hinted in your card to watch out for these Southern belles. You know me, pal, I love them all. Murder, can they jump down here. I got me the cutest little jitterbug you ever did see. I met her the same Saturday nite that we got your money—used it to get into the dance on the river boat. Her name is Mercedes, but it's Merry to her friends, and to me.

Don't worry about me with the ladies. I can handle the best of them. Tomorrow I have a date with a different one. I saw her walking down the street the other night in an evening gown under her coat. So,

naturally I was attracted to her. I said, "Hello," and she gave it right back to me. After walking a block with her I found out she was going to high school to play in a concert. Well, I escorted her to the joint, and that's when I dated her for tomorrow. She's nice, but isn't in the ball game with the tomatoes from my home town. No comebacks whatsoever. Ah, well, such is life. When you're in camp, bless 'em all. Whoever said that certainly had the right idea.

Love and stuff from your handsome nephew,

Duke

### *ENOUGH IS WHEN WE HAVE WON*

Dear Mack,

I have your letter in which you tell me that you have been reclassified by your board and that induction is imminent. I think I know exactly how you feel. I know what it is to leave that which is familiar and known and go forth into something unknown. You write that you are calm, and I rather think that the very intensity with which you insist that you are calm shows that you are a bit excited. And my God! you should be excited. This is a big war and a big experience, and the days we are living in are not ripe and lush and smelling of bath salts, nor full of the halcyon caprices of our dreamy childhood.

I know what I would write to any man about to take his place with the fighters against fascism. I should say many, many things, out of my living and my feeling and my thinking. Yet, the immediacy of your situa-

tion, your closeness to home, your thinking of momma, and so on, all of these elements are emotional and should be so. Well, then, I will try to tell you something emotionally: it will not be bad. No, to be a soldier now is not bad. It is a great thing, an experience which will be a veritable turning point in your life.

You are not living through an imperialist war, although many would like to make it so. This is a war of liberation. You cannot miss this experience. For all its unpleasantness, for all its terrifying loneliness and the despair which every soldier everywhere in all time has felt, if even for a little while, for all the denial, and sacrifice, and change—for all these things, it is an experience that is rich, rewarding, deep, and treasured. But that is possible only if you are a soldier who understands. If you become a soldier, I'm sure you will understand. That is all I can say to you.

I will not be sorry to see you leave and join us. It is not a sad thing, nor a tragic thing. Momma might say: are not three sons too much? are not two sons enough? When is enough? Enough is when we have won.

So be of good heart, and if you go—try to be a little proud.

With love,

Joseph

## *CHILDREN WITHOUT A COUNTRY*

India

“Merry Christmas, Folks!”

It's 4:30 p.m., India Daylight Saving Time, and I

have just returned to my desk in the office from Christmas dinner, which commenced at 1:30 p.m.

You may not believe this—but for the first time in my life I felt and witnessed the Christmas spirit in its entirety. “Peace on Earth” no—but “Good Will Toward Man”—this was beautifully demonstrated in today’s festivities.

Christmas really began at midnite last, when Mass was held here at the Base for those of Catholic faith. This morning at 10 a.m. Protestant services were held. Unfortunately I was unable to attend either service as my duties required my attendance here.

A group of our lads, full of the old St. Nick spirit, got the idea to do a bit of caroling last nite—and not without a fee, mind you. They collected some 210 Rupees or about \$80—which was presented to our Polish refugee guests at dinner time.

Our guests were brought here in our Army vehicles at about 1 p.m. All American units in this area likewise had their quota of Polish children to entertain. After these children had been shown around the camp area they were escorted by our American interpreters (both Polish Yanks who speak the language fluently). In all, our unit had about 30 children as guests. The oldest was about 16 while the rest were around 9, 10, 11 and several 4 and 5 years of age. Many of these children did not know what became of their parents—whether they were dead or alive! Our hearts went out to these children without a country. They are even now living under the most pitiable conditions.

Dinner consisted of chicken noodle soup, turkey,

dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, baked corn pudding, beans, salad, pumpkin pie, chocolate and vanilla layer cake—all beautifully decorated with our cook's fancy scrolls and flowers—bread, candy, fruit and orangeade. There was plenty to eat for everybody.

Best of all—I enjoyed watching the children eat. I don't believe they ever had a meal like it and boy did they enjoy it! They filled their pockets with candy while their faces glowed with happiness at the prospect of getting all those gift packages which were piled up under the Xmas tree with their Polish flag on top. Our Mess Hall was gayly decorated for the occasion, and as such provided a good deal of Xmas cheer.

Our quartet sang a program of Xmas carols excellently, after which each of our own officers got up to say a few words to the boys pertaining to our accomplishments. Then the Polish children sang us a few Polish Xmas carols. A couple gave monologues, in Polish, of course. I was touched to tears to see and hear these brave children express their heartfelt gratitude to the Americans and to all the Allies who had treated them so kindly. Then the many gifts were given out. Each package had a child's name on it and only our Polish interpreter could handle this tongue-twisting job. Out of our last month's pay came the money that was used for the purchase of these gifts. A toy or two were included in each package. Mainly, however, substantial items of clothing—for many of these refugee children arrived here with only the clothes on their backs and now with the chilly weather setting in, they needed sweaters, heavy socks and underwear, etc.



Lastly, a U. S. Chaplain spoke to us. His few words were well said, for they pointed out that the Christmas spirit should not be lacking here, for under a very similar background the first Christmas story was enacted. Our hearts are all swelled with the Glory of God this Christmas day, for His divine protection and demonstration daily of "Good Will Toward Man." I only hope you have all had as outstanding a Christmas as I have had. Even though we were not together we all have next year to look forward to.

Now keep well. I am praying for your happiness too and send my love to all.

Bud

## *A PRISONER OF WAR*

American Prisoner of War,  
Prisoner's Number 728,  
Stammlage Luft 3,  
Kriegsgefangenenpost, Germany

Dear Dale,

By this time I hope you have received my first card to let you know that I'm O.K. but very weary.

I received Nick's Christmas card of November 18th on March 11 with greetings from the student body. The letter was the first that I received since being a prisoner of war and you will never know how my hopes in life went up with the letter, so please thank the student body for me with all my heart.

If it is possible, have some cute young ladies write me a few letters, including some snapshots, to keep me

from going completely nuts; if a man was ever lonely and downhearted it's me. I've been down six months now and I'm starting to get mail from home now so it's not too bad. I'm feeling a little better now physically and putting on a little weight.

Give my regards to all and have some of the old gang write.

Sincerely,

Cookie

## *SALUTE TO THE FUTURE*

Somewhere in England

Dear New-born Pete,

Glad to have you with us, and I'm sure you'll understand the informal salutation, since you've been the subject of so much talk during this last nine months that I feel that I know you well already. Similarly, there's no need for me to elaborate on my reasons for addressing you in language other than baby talk. . . .

You're really quite a fortunate person—you have the advantage of having parents who not only love their own kid, but, even more important, love all kids. They've proved that by the fact that they've always been in there fighting for what is right and good for all kids and people. And they are fortunate, too, for now that fight becomes ever more personalized for them. You see, I don't really know whether they ever stopped to think these things out—most of us don't. But when big, world-shaking things like this war happens, we are all shaken into thought. For instance,

when I see the beautiful English kids—beautiful in form, face, and manner—and then see how terribly quickly they mature and get old these days, I'm really seeing and thinking about you and all kids. And then book-learning and even experience are given deep meaning. And that's compensation enough for anything I might have done or might do. To an ordinary grown-up all this might seem complex and confusing, but here, too, you have the advantage, because your vision has not yet been blurred by lies, distortions, half-truths, personal fears and self-seeking, and the wonderful security which is yours, at least for now, permits you to see unerringly and to feel directly from the heart.

Of course, with all these advantages, you inherit certain responsibilities. Not that they'll ever be thrust upon you as "your responsibilities"—your parents are too wise for that. But because they are your parents, and because they are wise, one day you'll find that you've taken up these responsibilities—the inheritance of everybody in a democracy like ours—because you wanted to. By then you will have come to learn what made us want to fight today for what we have, and what we want the world to be. And to this, you'll add your own experience, and fight just as hard in your own way, perhaps even more effectively, to hold on to and make even better what we're fighting for now.

By this time you've probably ferreted out my reasons for writing as I have. It's simple, really, you see I love you and your mom and your dad.

Charles

## *OUR SERVICES WERE CRUDE*

Somewhere in the Pacific

Dear Dr. J—,

Christmas this year was quite the strangest I've ever known, but nevertheless the full significance was still present. You see, on the twenty-fifth of December, we were fortunate enough to pull into a port and anchor in sight of land after many days at sea. Really and truly a fine present! In other respects we weren't quite so fortunate, however. For some unknown reason there wasn't a chaplain on board our ship, and our services were crude, but I shall never forget them.

A lieutenant undertook the task of conducting them for the enlisted men and officers, and I don't believe that I was ever nearer to my loved ones than I was on that Christmas Day. I guess it's true that often the simplest of things carry the greatest meaning. The carols were off key, and sometimes there were rather long periods of silence with only the gentle rocking of the ship at anchor to remind one that he was many miles from home. But I wasn't—on that day I was right at home. I never told Mother about it because she would figure she had a homesick son and that would never do—you know how mothers are.

One of my duties as a battery officer is to censor all outgoing mail. It does give me an "inside" view on our men, however. I've found that the Yanks, as outwardly tough as they may appear, have a great capacity for sentiment. And above all, a soldier still wants a letter

from home more than anything, and in some cases, just a letter. Just to know that somebody is thinking of them helps the morale 100 per cent—and there are periods when the morale is exceptionally low.

Would you do me the favor of impressing this on your congregation? Let them know how much a letter means and if they have anyone, or know anyone in the Forces, to send a brief note every now and then. It helps so much!

Sincerely,

Ralph

### *WE SHALL LIVE LIKE FREE MEN*

Dearest Mom,

It won't be Mother's Day for two hours, but it still is my birthday. I meant to write you tomorrow, but I guess today is just as good a time. How can you say Mother's Day makes you remember your Mom more than your own birthday? So this is sort of in-between both days, and all the more special. Another fact that makes it a really big time is that I'm thru my Army schooling, formally at least, and am about to start on the real thing. Probably tomorrow, or within a few days, I'll leave this post and go to some Field where my biggest job of all begins at last. It's going on nine months since I entered the Service—time enough to deliver this baby! I only hope my assignment will be to some place where I can be busiest at the work I prepared for, some place where I can do my best to help

win the war quickly, and get all of us guys to our moms and wives everywhere. The best gift for any Mom would be her sons, I'm sure.

But not her sons under *any* circumstances. Her sons in a *free* world, where with their families they can live like decent, self-respecting humans, not the hunted slaves that the Hitlers would make of them all. I would rather not live at all than some day see you or Hildy treated like the Jews in Berlin, or the Poles in Warsaw, or the Chinese in Nanking. And tho a lot of us soldiers gripe about being in uniform, and losing that freedom of action we had before, whenever we think of our world run by fascists, we know we belong where we are, and want more than anything else to prove we deserve being here. For it's a privilege to be a soldier or a sailor today—in any free army fighting fascism wherever it may strike the world.

These are true things we most of us don't think about much. The newspapers may write editorials about it, and bigshots make speeches about it, but privates and corporals and sergeants don't fuss over it. Maybe it would be better if we did—then we'd know more clearly what we're up against, why we're fighting, and for what. It always helps to be sure of yourself and your enemy. But even so, when it comes down to the real fighting, our guys have been right in there. Before this war is won, I feel a lot more of us—at home as well—will have learned more about the real world we live in—what makes it tick or break down, and why, and how to fix it so it'll run for the good of us all—the peaceful good. We've *got* to learn,

or we won't really win. The battles may be ended, but only for the month, the year or the generation. We want them to end for good, *forever*. That will come when we learn about ourselves and our country, when we know and like our neighbors across our borders and across the earth as well as we like and respect ourselves. When a Christian does not sneer at a Jew, when a white man does not spit upon a black man, when a German does not despise a Pole, then we shall live like free men.

I know you have sometimes said to yourself, "Why did I bear sons and bring them up to lose them in a war?" Well, there have been useless wars like that, with men dying for nothing but some oil or coal to be added to a rich man's wealth. And this war has had bad things like that mixed into it too. But most of us, most of the governments of the nations on our side, and surely all of the peoples on our side, are not fighting for that. We want a world where all men can be brothers. And what better fight could any mother give her sons and daughters to than this?

I have so much to thank you for, Mom, I don't know how I could think of enough ways to do it, to show you how much I love you. I guess I haven't said much about the way I feel before this. Being away for so long now has made you and me lots closer. It's one of the things I've learned about lately. I hope you knew it without my having said anything or done anything to tell you. You know it now, Mom.

All my love,  
Milton

## *KILLED WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY*

Somewhere in England

Dear Mother and Dad,

For quite some time now—ever since I left home to go away to school—I have intended to write a letter such as this. Just why I am choosing this moment after a period of over three years of having had it in mind, I am not entirely certain.

The three years which I was away from you was a period of paradoxical enjoyment. Paradoxical in that I enjoyed immensely the experiences and thrills of traveling, of doing crazy things, of finally realizing some of my ambitions born of an overdose of Halliburton taken at an adolescent age; and yet all the while being constantly aware of the concern which my absence and my adventures were causing you. Those three years bred within me a new confidence in being able to face each new and successive adventure with greater enthusiasm and a still greater certainty with regard to the outcome. Call it youthful cockiness if you like, but I personally rather believe that it was—and is—a combination of faith and proven accumulative results of His having helped me when I asked for His help. Now, sitting here tonight and writing this letter, none of that confidence has waned. Yet, in my pensive mood, I find that I do not actually fully believe that I shall live through this war. Even ignoring the figures and the odds against my survival, which I have always ignored in the past whenever I prayed to Him for help, I must consider that my span of life



might be considered to have been traversed.

I do not feel that I have even served mankind to the extent that I can say, "Well, I've done my bit, I guess I can quit now." No, it's certainly not that. If anything troubles my conscience at all when I consider death, it is that I find little at all in my records where I have ever been beneficial to my fellow man. No, it's more self-centered than all that. It's simply that I've lived as full a life, if not a more complete one, than many persons who were privileged to live to a ripe old age. During high school I decided to experience and perhaps to enjoy as many of the basic thrills of life as possible. Without boasting too much I can say that I succeeded well. Happiness and sorrow, blissfulness and worry, hope and despair, ecstasy and painful reality, love of comrades in common danger, all these and many more I tasted of through all the means that life and circumstances provided. . . . Please remember then, that I feel that I have lived a life-span; and here writing, perhaps I feel that God may feel that way too.

I can't possibly have any regrets if He does, and more than that, I shall be looking to the termination of my stay in this life as a new adventure which I shall be embarking on with the same eagerness, anticipation and confidence with which I have greeted new experiences in the past.

Mother and Dad, being your only child I have at least some idea of how much you must have loved me and how your whole life seemed to have been dedicated to my happiness and success. Considering that, what I have just said up to now in this letter may have

seemed just a bit weak and perhaps insufficient. Let me tell you the stories of two British mothers—mothers of some of Churchill's "so few"—.

The MacRoberts family before the war was quite wealthy and had seven fine young brothers—the sons of Sir and Lady MacRoberts. When the war broke out, all seven sooner or later managed to join the Royal Air Force. The war progressed, and as wars do, this World War No. 2 took its toll. The MacRoberts brothers were no exception, and one by one Lady MacRoberts—who was now a widow—received messages from the Air Ministry stating something to the effect that another one of her sons was "lost in action" or was "missing and believed dead." By September of 1941 she had received six of these messages. She had but one son left. And then—he too failed to return from a flight over Germany. Her reply to this last message from the Air Ministry was a check for £25,000 (over \$100,000) with the instructions that they were to purchase an aircraft in her sons' honor. A large four engined bomber was purchased with the funds and christened "The MacRoberts' Reply."

Hatred and revenge were not the motives behind this gesture, I am sure. Just the desire to further the cause which seven of her dearest possessions had contributed to already with their lives.

The other story is about the mother of a bomber pilot. She was of humbler station in life, but she possessed that same unfaltering courage in the face of a very dear sacrifice as Lady MacRoberts did. When the squadron orderly office informed her about the de-

tails, as they knew them, of her son's failing to return from a raid over Germany, they received a reply from her a few days later thanking them and asking for the names and addresses of the parents of the boys in her son's crew! In due time she had written letters of consolation to each of them.

Mother and Dad, certainly you can find courage that will measure up to these two women! I say "so long" again, and thanks from the bottom of my heart for everything!

Bob

### *THANKS TO THE UNION*

Dear Brother,

In the early part of May I was up to see you. I had come to New York on my furlough and I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to thank you for the cordial way that I was treated at Union Headquarters. I also wish to thank you for all the back vacation money that the Union and its members so graciously gave me for a gift. To say that it came in handy at that time would be a masterpiece of understatement. It made it possible for me to have a grand and glorious vacation in New York.

Now I come to more recent happenings. Yesterday was my birthday and in the mail I received a check for ten dollars and fifty cents which according to your letter was the balance of the vacation money that was being given to those members of the Union who had entered the armed services of our nation. It was one

of the nicest gifts that I have ever received for my birthday.

It is not the money that gave me so much joy as the fact that it proved to me, as it must have proven to the rest of the boys and girls in the service, that not only are we not forgotten by our friends at home but that our small efforts have been appreciated. I know that I can count on you all to deliver the goods time and time again until victory shall be ours. Believe me with support like that we who are doing the fighting shall not stop until victory is ours and the destruction of the Axis nations is complete.

Fraternally yours,  
Mitchel W.

### *WEDDING ANNIVERSARY*

Hello, darling,

Your letter today was so darn happy it had me glowing. Yesterday's was like that too. Our Second Wedding Anniversary. And you wrote too about my tenth month in the army and what you thought we'd learned in that time. I've learned to love you so much better, so much more understandingly, I think. I guess it's part of getting to know so many more people thru the Army, living with them, learning what they're like in ways that are so different from those we knew before. It's opened me up, somehow, and made me softer inside, but in a good way. And that can't help but affect the way I feel about you, sweetheart. Each time I look forward to another visit together, I feel I want to

bring something more to you, something better than I was before, something more true to the best that you are.

I am hoping you will get a package the same moment you get this letter—and that should be Tuesday, June 22nd, the second anniversary of the momentous day when Herr Hitler cooked his goose and I married mine. I had a helluva time trying to find something real special for you, sweetheart. The shops here are like pushcarts, only more expensive, and my snobbish 5th Avenue taste was not satisfied. Yesterday I got what I hope you will consider an inspiration. I went into a music shop, and despite a limited stock, managed to select 5 records I think you will go for. (I know we have no phonograph of our own, but it is one of our post-war objectives, isn't it? And you can play these at Eve's or at the L's, who must have one.)

We've danced happily to every one of these bands, either in person, or on records, and both of us love 'em lots. In one or two cases I was able to get just those particular numbers we liked—like Hampton's "Jack the Bellboy." The other bands are the Duke's, Kirby's, Shaw's and Goodman's. Comes a furlough and we will be able to dance all day at home to the music we love. I know it will remind you of many wonderful times we had together. But outside the gift, darling, there's the way I feel about you, the records don't tell it by millions of miles. Nor can I tell it in words that say it all and say it right. I love you, sweet, beyond the limit of my life.

Mike

## ON THIS MOTHER'S DAY

Tutuila, Samoa

Dear Mom,

Today is Mother's Day and I am celebrating your day in the way that I believe that you would want me to, that is by going to Church, and thereby expressing my sincere determination to keep those principles alive in my heart that you put there by those years of training. I can think of no better way of expressing my love for you, and my confidence in your way of life than being at Divine Worship this morning, singing hymns and praying and trying in my own way to express my gratitude to Almighty God for giving me the grandest mom in all the world.

Everything is going well with me here. Duty in the South Pacific is not the most pleasant duty in the world, but I knew when I joined the Navy that it wasn't a weekend party that I was going on, and if my being here means that the war will not get to you or Dad or our country, I am glad to suffer what discomforts may come. Someone has to make the long, hard marches, and I am proud that I can do the harder jobs as well or better than the next fellow.

Well, Mom, there isn't much that I can say on this Mother's Day that hasn't been said many, many times by other guys that could use pretty words better than I. All that I can say to you is that I love you, and that I will strive to be the kind of a man that you believe that I am.

Your son,

Harold

## *FRENCH CHRISTMAS*

With the Fighting French

Dear Aunt Julia,

Well Christmas was something, really something. Hardly know where to begin but will start with Christmas Eve at the Legion Headquarters. Earlier in the day we had gathered some camel grass, a small shrub that looks like an evergreen, and constructed a tree which we decorated with bits of cotton. Then in the evening we gathered around it and the M.O. gave those attached to the Poste du Secour a tin of peaches (like gold out here), a package of cigarettes, and a cup of Zombe, a kind of absinthe stronger than vodka; this kind of liquor continued to flow all evening in the sergeant-chief's tent. At twelve o'clock he lit candles and every one said a few silent prayers and crossed themselves. The sergeant-chief said everyone was to do this because it was Jesus Christ's birthday.

Next morning, Christmas Day, had cafe au lait and pastries the cook had made "pour" Noel. After stuffing myself at his insistence, "Encore pour les Americaines," got back to my tent only to be called back to the cook's wagon once again for liverwurst sandwiches and glasses of wine all the morning. When I got back to my tent, Santa Claus had been there, the French packages that they gave the F.F.C. were lying on the seat of my ambulance, containing towel, hankies, razor blades, packet of figs, shaving stick, comb, a cone of sugar and, believe it or not, a sausage. I immediately put the figs

in a bowl and Bill and myself had open house.

You should see my tent put up lean-to fashion; have sort of couches made of duffel bags, a small table with books, ciggies, and odds and ends on it. Hung up on the back of the tent is one of the pictures I painted en route, also two bouquets of flowers, yes, I said flowers, as the rainy season is on and I run into an occasional bunch. At either side of my entrance, I have empty gun cartridge cases filled with evergreen camel grass. Now that the scene is laid, on with the play, much too much fun to be war. Several members of the Legion dropped in for a few words of greeting, figs or a cigarette. These French are affectionate, having seen all of them the previous evening, they would come in and (figuratively speaking) throw themselves upon you with their Noel greetings.

Then dinner, *mon dieu*, what a feast, what a setting! Tables had been set up covered with blankets, with flowers down the middle in the form of the Croix de Lorraine. For the first hour of the meal we indulged in hors d'oeuvres, cold meat, sausage, etc., etc. Then the *piece de resistance*, turkey! And the way it was cooked, *mon dieu*, such artisticness! It had been boiled in water for twenty-four hours with herbes, etc., and so on, then just before serving the chunks of white meat had been seared in butter over a wood fire. With that we had fried potatoes; Zombe flowed freely with this course and the rest of the meal. Then we had lamb cooked and seared with boiled cabbage, ending with coffee and French cigars. Then more wine and the feast turned into a small but loud riot. At our table of about



fourteen, some one remarked "Regards mon Francais!" There wasn't a Frenchman at the table. There were Spanish, Poles, Czechs, Armenians, South Americans (Chile), two of us from North America—the language a mixture of all.

The Spanish started the Internationale, and we all jumped up and sang it giving the clenched fist salute, then songs from everyone and every nation going all round the table; some one pulled out a mouth organ, more wine, then dancing on the table, glasses and plates flying in all directions, wonderful loud vocal arguments (reminded me of our table at home). Bill and I finally managed to get on our feet and into my ambulance as we were given two hours leave to go to our headquarters about eighteen miles away. We had promised to return for Christmas Eve, but our Legion cook had heard of it and told us in so many words that if we did not care to eat their Christmas dinner, and if we didn't think that their cooking was the best in the French army, and would so insult them by going elsewhere for food, we could eat all our meals elsewhere. Temperaments here are wonderful and I have never met such a happy group. Everyone is in a happy dazed glow.

Well, we rolled into our A.F.S. where the Fighting French were giving a reception for the French officers. Had wonderful eggnog, fruit cake, nuts, and candy which all of us donated out of the boxes the A.F.S. had sent out from Cairo. The tent was decorated with evergreens so you see what a glorious Christmas yours truly had. They say New Years is even greater than

Christmas with the French. I hope my system can stand up under this grand living.

With love,  
Collie

## *FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY*

Camp Forrest, Nashville, Tennessee  
Council Against Intolerance in America,  
New York City.

Gentlemen,

I wish to thank you for your letter of acknowledgment of my purchase of Tolerance and Democracy Seals. I am sincerely interested in any organization that makes a real effort to bring about a closer understanding among *all* people of this country.

Any group of people that places itself apart from and claims to be above any other group, whether that group be Negro, Catholic, Jew, or the local chapter of "Hep-Cats to Perpetuate the Music of Harry James," carries the seeds of fascism.

At the present time it is obvious that the Negro race is on the receiving end of most of the discrimination. The recent shocking episode in Detroit is a sample of what could happen in many parts of our country which is under a great emotional stress. I predict that after the war there will be more serious disorders against the colored people than we have known since the reconstruction period after the Civil War. Many unemployed whites will regard the jobs that many Negroes

hold as work that they could have if the Negro were pushed aside. Any thinking individual knows that this thing is false. While this theory may be true for an individual case—it is certainly not true when viewing the employment and economy of the entire country.

The killing and destruction we have glorified in war will be hard to erase from the people's minds. It is vitally necessary to do what we can to educate the people, not in hate, but in mutual respect for each other regardless of race, creed, or religion.

As for discrimination against the Negro in the Army, there is little that I can say. My association with Negro troops is extremely limited, but as far as I have been able to observe, army policy toward the colored races has been fair for the most part.

In my class at Fort Benning for Officer Candidate Training, eight of 200 men were colored. On the first day, two of the candidates placed a sign over one of the toilets which read "Colored Only." For this episode they were nearly expelled before the school ever started. The Captain in charge of the company was raging mad when he saw the sign and informed the entire class that our eight Negro classmates were to receive the same treatment and consideration as the rest of us.

The sign came down and for the following three months, the Negro candidates were on the same status as everyone else. Never again did I hear a word spoken against them. They made a fine record for themselves and had to be rated along with their white classmates.

The army does separate the Negro race—except in

the various service schools. I believe it would be possible to have mixed units. As many people would object to such a policy—especially the Southerners, I believe the army is following a policy which it considers to be prudent.

This letter is being written while on maneuvers in Tennessee. We have little time to ourselves or I would have written much sooner. Keep up the good work—I would like to believe that I am fighting for equality in our own country, too. We can hardly talk of liberation of the rest of the world until we remove the mote from our own eye.

Sincerely,  
Lt. Arthur J.

### *BOUND BY A COMMON GRIEF*

In the Middle East

Dear Mr. S—,

Though I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, I feel that I know you very intimately. My closest friend was your son Albert, who admired you more than he admired anyone in the world, and who, during our recent journey across the oceans, told me that you had been the strongest influence upon his life. Because of Al's frequent reference to you in terms of deep affection and respect, I am addressing this letter to you, though I earnestly hope that it will also bring comfort to Mrs. S, your other sons, and Betty, whom I shall write later.

Last Tuesday evening I had expected to meet Al at

dinner in the mess hall now used by both our units. As I arrived there, one of his tent-mates told me that he had been hurt when a truck, in which he was returning from an assignment to the garrison, overturned near here. I was stunned by the news, but the first reports were so vague that I hoped desperately that his injuries would not be serious and that I might continue to enjoy the rare privilege of his friendship, as I had in the fullest sense since last summer. The next morning I heard that my hopes had been in vain.

Hesitant as I am to intrude upon your privacy by giving free expression to my own feelings at a time when you are undergoing the heaviest ordeal a father can experience, I still should like to convey, not a formal message of sympathy, but to speak to you as one who, through six months of close association with your son, feels bound to you now by a common grief.

Al spoke often of the attitude you had about his serving, along with your other sons, in the Army of their native country. He told me with intense satisfaction that, when he left Philadelphia to enter the service, pride was the only emotion you showed. He said that you helped him to begin his career in the Army without the slightest reservation as to the nobility of its purpose, and I am confident that he never wavered in this belief no matter what obstacle or disappointment he met. I told him many times that his calm acceptance of Army life, even when it brought hardships that he had never expected to go through, was to me very remarkable; and he would answer that I could not understand how he felt without knowing you and

the boundless gratitude you always expressed for the blessings of America.

Through sheer force of character and will-power and a natural sense of dignity, Al became a good soldier. He was devoted to the job the Army assigned him as if it were his private business, and he did an amount of work that it would have required two ordinary soldiers to accomplish. His morale never faltered. When he heard grumbling about the food and other conditions in the service, he took it almost as a personal offense. He went to great pains to point out to his fellow soldiers how well off they were compared with soldiers of other countries, and he usually succeeded in making them ashamed of the importance they attached to their individual comfort and security. . . .

Last Thursday, a group of us, the officers and the men who knew Al best, drove from here to a nearby military cemetery, where a rabbi of the British Army read the service. There was a brilliant sun casting shadows on the sand; and the first spring flowers had pushed their way through the earth; Arabs in strange dress moved in the background. It was unlike the cold February days I had known in Philadelphia when I was in school there, and I wondered what the day was like in the city where Al had spent most of his life.

A group picked from Al's squadron fired a volley of shots, and then the bugler sounded taps. That was all I can remember. It seemed incredible to me, this farewell to my friend, for I knew I could never find anyone to take his place. Yet I was consoled by the fact that he had spent his last moments with complete

peace of mind and serenity of spirit that come to those who have met their highest obligations to God and to their fellow beings.

I feel heavily indebted to Al for a friendship to which he contributed far more than I was capable of giving. Please let me know if there is ever anything I can do to show my gratitude toward him or to honor his noble memory.

Yours sincerely,

August

## *THE ALCAN*

Alaska

Dear Mother and Dad,

The men of Guadalcanal, Bataan, Midway  
Of festering New Guinea jungles,  
Manning ack-ack guns on Wake;  
Saying, "sighted sub, sank same."  
Or shrapnel shattered, laughing,  
"Be careful of my poor butt and  
What will I tell the folks back home,"  
These men have stood against death  
And flung defiance in her face.  
(I say "her" because soldiers fear death  
as they fear an unknown woman, they are  
not afraid of the thing itself, but rather  
of their conduct when they meet.)

These men we must salute.

Not as we salute an officer, but as  
we hail proven mettle. We expect no  
return salute, our place has been lowly.  
We expect merely the common recognition  
that one man who has done his job well  
Accords another. Our claims are modest  
and must be as we salute the Heroes, the men  
who have won the battle against fear.  
Someday, we too may face fear and win,  
but until we are so proven, we acclaim  
the heroes and continue with our work.

This work has a glory, too.  
We have been builders and planners.  
Our battles have been with forests.  
Obdurate trees, treacherous muskeg,  
Stubborn rock, mosquitoes. Our enemies  
are passive, they await attack with  
the calmness, the unyielding front of Nature.  
“We must lose,” they say, “but we will try  
your brawn and manhood. Yes, we must lose  
the battle,” they say, “but there’s still the war.  
In the spring, we’ll clutch at your feet, we’ll  
drown your road in mud. Thaws will loose the  
rocks of the mountains and cover your flimsy  
scar that traverses a wilderness. You’ll  
eat, breathe, suffer our pestiferous gnats,  
and mosquitoes will live on your slow-shed blood.  
You’ll work until your muscles turn to  
aching bands and your weary minds grasp at  
unconsciousness.



You'll sweat and stink and wish to God  
for a porcelain bathtub, and bathe in  
a G.I. cup full of water. You'll eat  
stew and beans and dream about steaks.  
Your dreams will be busted up by shoulder-shaking  
Sergeants. "C'mon, bums, on your feet. There's  
a convoy in . . . let's unload it or load it. Let's  
repair and service the trucks, feed the weary  
drivers, fix 'em up a place to sleep."

It's 5:45 A.M. and the bright daylight of  
morning pierces eyes still sleep swollen.  
Toothbrushes and soap and into denims. Shoe-pacs  
against the mud . . . the mess line in the rain.  
Watered coffee, pale yellow powdered eggs,  
sowbelly. Eat and wash your mess kits, drill call.

Then into combat formation.  
The "armored" boys mount their huge cats.  
Sleepy Diesel motors snort into angry wakefulness.  
The "dozers" move out to batter down forests,  
obliterate hummocks. The drivers are lordly men  
now. "Here's power for you," they sing, "down you  
go you son-of-a-bitch. O-ho, a stubborn one, back  
off and hit her again." The wooden tendons strain  
and crack, the angry motor spits and snarls, the  
smilingly contemptuous driver goads the champion  
forward. Down goes the enemy.

Behind the cats come the "infantry." Shovels, axes,  
mattocks take infinitesimal bites from the forest.

Now we have a trail of mud. Trucks wallow and stick. Motors whine, muscles strain, wheels spin impotently. Faces contort . . . grimy, mosquito-bumped faces of America . . . the lads of the "soft" generation. Sure, we were jitterbugs, ate goldfish, necked in the parks, and wore loud socks. We walked on cement, and slept on beautyrest mattresses, and went on beerbusts.

We asked for jobs. The Big Boys told us "No Experience, can't use you," or put us to work wrapping packages and running errands. Look now, big boys, we didn't have any experience at road building . . . but you've got your road and we're the guys that built it. Look here, strikers and absentee workers, we don't know nothing about a forty hour week or absenteeism because of Saturday night jags. All we know is that here's your road and it's a nice hunk of insurance on your futures.

We never were Americans before. We'd seen the pictures of seam-faced mountain men and read of Lincoln splitting rails. We visited the shrines . . . saw movies "The Covered Wagon," "Iron Horse," "Cimarron," but we saw them from plush seats. Now, by God, we're Americans too. We know all about opening up new country and batting our heads against Mother Nature. Now we're on the Old American Beam . . . we're thinking about tomorrow. The corduroy roads will be concrete. We'll build 'em, and build 'em solid. There'll

be bad times now, but this time we can take it.

You learn to take it in the Long Winter.

You learn how to look down inside yourself and see what's there. There aren't any movies so you can get away from yourself. You learn how to read the things you were supposed to have read in school. You learn how to think.

In little snow-covered huts in the middle of white wasteland, Americans are worrying about tomorrow. They are learning to be citizens of a democracy.

Rich man, poor man, every man here meets.  
Meets and lives together. This is democracy.  
Each of us must do his part to keep the fires going  
Against Winter. Each of us must help to cut the  
wood and haul the coal and fetch the oil that makes  
the rampart against a killing enemy. No privileged  
classes here, a dollar bill ain't edible and blue  
blood freezes as quickly as red. Everybody works  
and everybody lives.

This lesson alone can shape a nation. Can shape  
it back to the place where all men have a dignity.  
The dignity of common endeavor,  
each man doing his job,  
Thinking his thoughts and respecting the ideals,  
worships, and labors of his barracks buddies.  
Yes, we must salute the New York Jew who dies in

a Stuka blast in Tunis. The strong faced Russian at Stalingrad is our brother. Tirailleur, Chasseur, Tommy, Aussie, China soldier, Pole, Texas boy with a death-load in his bomb bays, farmer boy, city boy . . . we salute you all.

You, German, Jap, Italian, don't you see the work ahead for all of us?

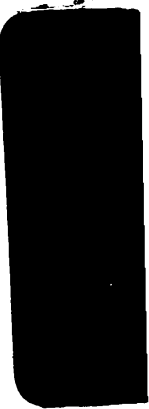
This work of murder is unfit for men, and still we must salute the men who do it well. They are strong and brave. We too have done our work.

God grant the day when all alike shall pit their strength and heroism and skill against the real enemies . . . the wants of the world, and in a ceaseless timeless struggle against nature, we'll be fighting a real man's war, for a real people's victory.

Ken







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